



**Georgia** Institute  
of **Technology**

City and Regional Planning Program  
**Brownfields Studio 2002**

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to all!**



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# Studio Participants

## Faculty Members

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**John Skach, AIA** is a visiting faculty member of the Georgia Institute of Technology and an associate of Urban Collage, Inc., a multi-disciplinary firm located in Atlanta that specializes in physical planning. He is a licensed architect, originally practicing in his native Chicago concentrating on large-scale, high-rise urban projects. In 1992, he relocated to Europe where he spent three years involved in design consulting, teaching and research in the United Kingdom, Switzerland and the Netherlands. He re-engaged American practice in 1995 with the intent of pursuing architecture as a critical component of the creation of cultural landscapes. Since 1999, he has been involved in a number of urban design initiatives, including town planning, public housing redevelopment and brownfield revitalization projects for several Southeastern communities.

**Richard Dagenhart** is an Associate Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the Georgia Institute of Technology. After receiving his education in architecture and anthropology at the University of Arkansas, he completed his Master of Architecture and Master of City Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. At Georgia Tech, Dagenhart currently directs the *Mayors' Institute on City Design: South*, a program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, and he teaches urban design in both the Architecture and City and Regional Planning Programs. He is active in research projects, combining design and planning, especially regarding urban infrastructure, development regulations, affordable housing, and brownfield and greyfield redevelopment. Recent projects include an investigation on the relationship of subdivision regulations and urban form for the Brookings Institution and a series of articles on the origins and form of contemporary urbanism.





## Student Members

**Travis Campbell** is from Clinton, Iowa and received his undergraduate degree in Architecture from Iowa State University. He is in her second year of the City and Regional Planning program and is specializing in Land Development and Real Estate.

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**Raushan Johnson** is from Chicago, Illinois and received his undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from Iowa State University. He is in his second year of the City and Regional Planning program and is specializing in Land Development.

**Oliver Obregón** is from Guatemala, Central America and received his undergraduate degree in Architecture. He is in his second year of the City and Regional Planning program and is specializing in Urban Design and Transportation.

**Lynn Patterson** is the only doctoral student participating in the studio and is specializing in Economic Development. Lynn has ten years experience in economic development. She formerly served as the Assistant City Manager for Development at the City of Kennesaw and the Assistant Director for Community Design at Civano in Tucson, Arizona.

**Alex Pearlstein** is from Los Angeles, California and received his undergraduate degree in Communications from the University of California, San Diego. He is in his second year of the City and Regional Planning program and is specializing in Economic Development.

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**Jason Ward** is from Dallas, Texas and received his undergraduate degree in Geography from Penn State University. He is in his second year of the City and Regional Planning program and is specializing in Land Development.





# Introduction

The Georgia Institute of Technology City and Regional Brownfield Redevelopment Studio began with a focus on 37 sites that were identified as brownfields in Fort Valley when its application for EPA Brownfield grants was made. It soon became clear that, in the broadest sense of the term, Fort Valley is a brownfield community. Consequently, the brownfield redevelopment plan presented here is, in fact, a community-wide redevelopment plan. For the key to addressing wide-scale scattered brownfields in a community is found by placing the sites within the overall community context. An overall redevelopment focus can help strengthen the local economy and market conditions which, in turn, can generate the interest in, and demand for, re-using its wide array of brownfield sites.



Based originally on 37 identified brown-fields

While the history of Fort Valley suggests that it has been a typical small southern town, divided down the middle by railroad tracks and race, the full potential of Fort Valley's future rests upon the town resolving that "there is no other side of the tracks." This requires enhancing the value and ability to contribute of all members of the community.



'There is no other side of the tracks'

The town has to resolve and rectify past environmental injustices and demonstrate its commitment to prevent future environmental injustices. This requires the incorporation of current business and economic development activities. Most importantly, it will require **making connections** between the poorly functioning districts and nodes of the community so that they can augment and support each other. Successfully making connections will mean that the whole of Fort Valley can become greater than the sum of its disparate parts.



Making connections the key

Thus, the focus of this redevelopment plan is on making connections for Fort Valley. The research and analysis of the studio has revealed numerous and exciting proposals for making connections that will transform all of Fort Valley into a quality small-town for everyone.



# I. The Region, the County, and the City

The City and Regional Planning Program at the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) undertook a study and redevelopment plan for Fort Valley Brownfield Sites in the Fall of 2002. In this studio, 8 Masters Students and 1 PhD Student, under the leadership of 3 Georgia Tech Professors, conducted a detailed study of the city, its brownfield sites, and its exhibited and latent strengths and weaknesses, to develop a meaningful, implementable and effective redevelopment plan to support the future of Fort Valley. The Studio drew heavily upon the history of Fort Valley and the uniqueness of the city to inform the plan. The Plan is centered on the establishment of three redevelopment districts supported by larger city-wide programs to encourage sustainable growth and development in the community. The theme for Fort Valley is “Making Connections”. The need for connectivity is multi-faceted and comprehensive. It includes social and cultural institutions, geographic areas, economic activities, and environmental conditions. Without these connections, Fort Valley will continue to suffer from decline and disinvestments in its community. With these connections, the potential of Fort Valley will be realized and it will become an attractive residential, business and recreation location.



The Studio

## 1. Studio Methodology

In preparing the Brownfield Redevelopment Plan, the Studio members conducted detailed investigations for each of the previously 37 identified brownfield sites.<sup>1</sup> These investigations included reviews of historic Sanborn Maps from 1890 to 1958 and aerial photos, site visits to the Fort Valley brownfield properties, cultural, industrial and agricultural histories of the city, use and ownership histories of properties, tax delinquency status, and contextual review of surrounding neighborhoods and street classifications.



Information  
sources

Combined, these methods conveyed a rich sense of place for Fort Valley. Sanborn Maps revealed historic industrial uses of properties, as well as growth patterns of the city. City histories offered insight into the foundations of the town and a legacy to build upon. Site visits enabled studio members to view the properties in their current condition, to determine the quality of structures on the properties, and to get a feel for the context in which the property was located. Studio members also conducted interviews with local residents and property owners to augment their knowledge of the people and places of Fort Valley.

With this information in hand, the studio members reassembled to discuss their findings and to identify a method for redevelopment. The consensus was that any attempt to redevelop parcels in isolation of one another and without a



central theme would provide only minimal impact in the brownfield redevelopment plans. The Studio considered the context in which the parcels were located and each parcel's relationship to its immediate environs. From this perspective, the Studio was able to identify key influences in three areas, as well as groupings of brownfield sites. Consolidating sites with similar contexts, the Studio was able to draw meaning out of each of the districts. This meaning gave each of the geographic areas a unique identity, while developing a larger sense of continuity for the community as a whole.

The three districts developed were (1) the Northern District, influenced by the presence of the Bluebird Body Company, the Vineville Neighborhood and the Five Points intersection; (2) the Central District, influenced by the Woolfolk Superfund site, the Main Street downtown corridor and the railroad depots; and (3) the University District,



### Definition of 3 districts



**Figure G-1:** Location of the three developed districts. In blue, the North District, dominated by the Blue Bird plant; in red, the Central District, dominated by the Downtown area and the Woolfolk superfund site; and in green, the South District, dominated by Fort Valley State University. The gray circles in the background represent a 1/2 or 1/4-mile radius surrounding of the 37 identified brownfield sites. (Source: Studio.)



supported by Fort Valley State University (FVSU), Ganoville and Peach County Industrial Park.

Each of the districts identified has a unique vision, complementary to the larger vision. These visions are discussed in the corresponding sections of this document. First, however, a unifying vision for Fort Valley's Brownfield Redevelopment Plan must be presented. This vision takes into consideration the people and places unique to Fort Valley. The report then introduces comprehensive city-wide strategies and projects based upon supporting studies. These studies are available in the appendices for further review.



**Organiza-  
tion of  
report**

## 2. Vision for Fort Valley

All good planning initiatives require a vision. This vision must be readily understood and the path to implementation, however difficult, must be clear. In considering the vision, the Studio identified necessary theme to be present in all development projects in Fort Valley – “Making Connections”. As much as “no man is an island”,<sup>2</sup> no city can afford to err in believing they can isolate themselves from conditions in their own community or the community at large. All of a community's parts are interdependent, interwoven and inextricably linked. It is the connectivity and balance between and within these conditions that strengthen and propel communities to success. The Studio presents the following as the recommended vision statement for Fort Valley's Brownfield Redevelopment process:



**'Making  
connec-  
tions'**

**Fort Valley is a small, rural southern community that honors and celebrates its agricultural, transportation, and cultural heritage. To meet the diverse needs of its population, Fort Valley seeks to balance its economic growth, social development and environmental conservation activities. This balance is achieved through the interconnectivity of its history, people, institutions, industry and landscape.**



**Proposed  
vision**

**In Fort Valley, the railroad tracks are reframed as the nexus of all the city and region have to offer. The tracks no longer divide, but unite. They are a symbol of Fort Valley's history and its future. Likewise, the nodes of industry located throughout the city anchor Fort Valley's redevelopment efforts. The long industrial history, such as that of Bluebird Body Company, shape Fort Valley's image and economic foundation. Recognizing the strengths of existing industry and nurturing the growth of new industry for Fort Valley will ensure its success. Similarly, the institutions of Fort Valley have significant economic, social and leadership attributes to lend to the growth of the city. Fort Valley State University provides an unparalleled resource rich in cultural history, academic excellence, leading edge research and faculty, staff and student involvement in**





**the community. The edge of the city is framed by its agricultural activities and serves as a reminder to the heritage and economic boom once felt through its presence. The preservation and augmentation of all of these defining characteristics support Fort Valley's unique character and continued role in Georgia's tradition of agricultures. It is essential that all development efforts seek to maximize each of these attributes, envelop them into the larger development vision, and recognize their interdependence for a successful future of Fort Valley. As a result of these endeavors, Fort Valley will contribute to the overall success of Peach County by setting the example of a successful, diverse, vibrant, and self-sufficient community.**

The Fort Valley Brownfield Redevelopment Studio vision reinforces the broader vision set out by the City of Fort Valley while redirecting its priorities on the foundations of Fort Valley's academic, industrial, social and agricultural heritage.

"Fort Valley will be a model small town community where its people care for each other and are committed to a developed business and industrial complex, expanded boundaries, efficient municipal services in cooperation with the county and a quality of life second to none."<sup>3</sup>

The Studio recommends that the emphasis on expansion of boundaries be subordinate to the redevelopment activities within existing jurisdictional boundaries. The Studio fully supports the key points underscored in the vision that stress economic development, preservation of history, culture and natural resources, improvement of education system which promotes lifelong educational opportunities, well-planned transportation infrastructure, developing pride in neighborhoods, promoting leisure and recreational opportunities, promoting tourism in Fort Valley as part of a regional strategy, and developing cooperative services for the citizens of Fort Valley.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Historical Background

The origins of Fort Valley as a place in rural central Georgia can be traced back to the vision of one man, James A. Everett, a prominent landholder and cotton grower in the area. He secured a permanent post office from the US government in Crawford County, about halfway between Knoxville and Perry on December 7, 1825, using for the first time the name Fort Valley.<sup>5</sup> Other accounts place the establishment of the trading post in the year 1834.<sup>6</sup> The name, however, was probably intended to be *Fox Valley*; the misreading of the handwritten name may have resulted in the adoption of the current name.<sup>7</sup> At that time, Fort Valley Post Office, with James Everett as the postmaster, hardly resembled a town as only a handful of pioneers lived nearby. Moreover, the location of the town actually was about two miles away from its current site, near a pond that does not exist any more.<sup>8</sup>

Everett sensed the tremendous positive impact that the railroad would have on



**Current  
vision**



**Origins**

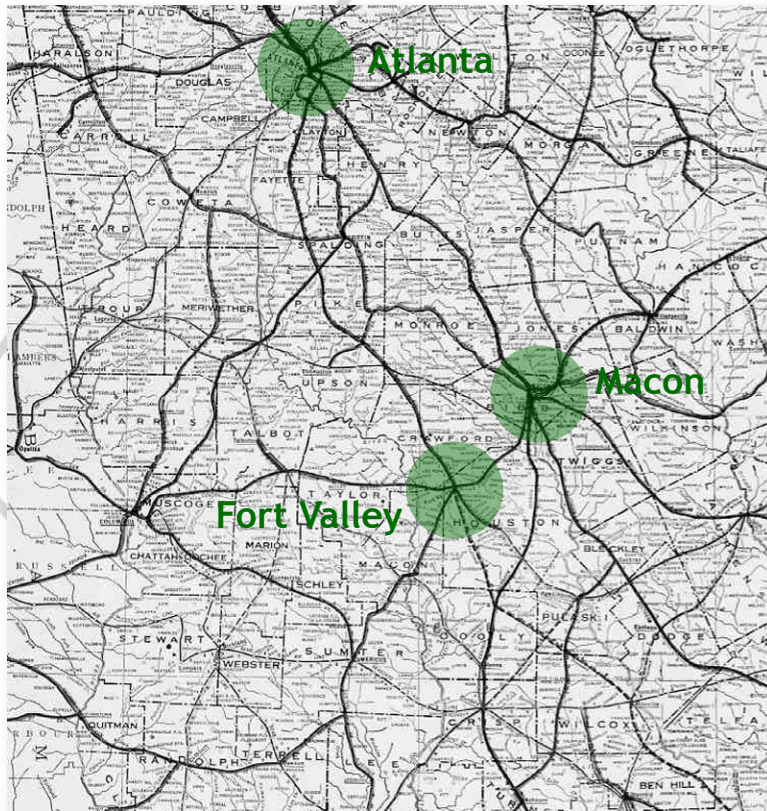




the economy of the area around Fort Valley. He was one of the first to support the new *Southwestern Railroad*, chartered in 1845, which attempted to join Macon to the Chattahoochee River and Albany. By donating the land for the depot and the right of way and purchasing \$50,000 worth of its shares, James Everett was able to trump Perry for the location through which the railroad would pass on its southbound direction. The first train arrived in 1851, and the town of Fort Valley was chartered on March 3, 1856, with corporate limits stretching out a radius of one mile from the railroad depot.<sup>9</sup> Over the remainder of the 19th century, three new railroad lines made Fort Valley an



## The railroads



**Figure G-2:** Railroad map of the central part of Georgia, showing the strategic location of Fort Valley. Note the sixth proposed rail line to the south of town, which was never built. (Source: Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, <<http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/rail.html>>)

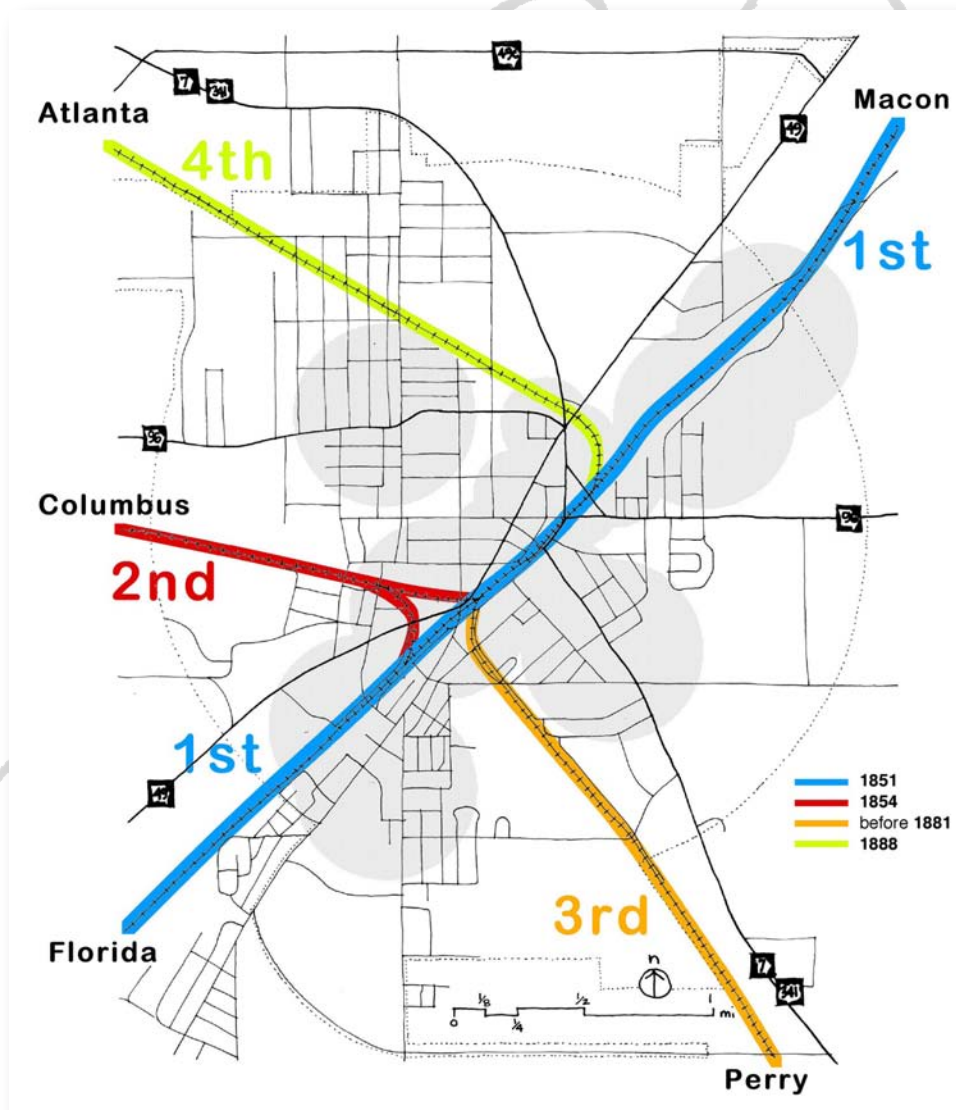
important regional transportation node: the Columbus Branch came in 1854, joining the Southwestern Railroad right at Fort Valley; a local commuter branch to Perry was developed after the Civil War; and lastly, in 1888, the Atlanta and Florida Railroad, also joined the Southwestern Railroad in the city. The railroads brought tourists traveling south, and at the peak of the railroad era, there were ten passenger trains daily running through town. This created the need for accommodations, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, three major hotels had been established by the railroad tracks, of which only one is still standing, the former *Basset Rooming House*. The palm trees existing in the surroundings of the rail station were planted around that time to impress southbound travelers with the first of these tropical plants in the way to Florida.



## South-bound tourism

However, the main economic impact of the railroads was the accessibility to





**Figure G-3:** Growth of the railroad network in Fort Valley, showing the year each branch was built. (Source: Studio, based on various sources.)

the markets of the north for farmers in and around Fort Valley. The main crop at the time was cotton, and Houston County (Fort Valley's original county) rivaled even Burke County in the production of this natural fiber.<sup>10</sup> By the 1890s, cotton had been slowly replaced by a crop that remains the primary agricultural crop today -- peaches. The proximity to the railroad was essential to the shipping of this fruit, which needed ice-cooled express trains to ensure it would arrive in good condition at its destination. Peach planting was such an important crop in the area that it became the principal reason the establishment of a new county in 1923, named Peach County. Fort Valley became the county seat of this new county. Apart from peaches, agricultural production also experimented with pecans and asparagus. Pecan growing continues to be a strong activity in and around the town. In the 1920s, the wealth created by the peaches and the need to create public support for the creation of the new county resulted in a series of celebrations called the Peach Blossom Festivals. During the festivals the whole town would participate in pageants, parades, poetry competitions and barbecues that drew significant out of the state interest: with over 60,000 persons attended in 1925.<sup>11</sup>



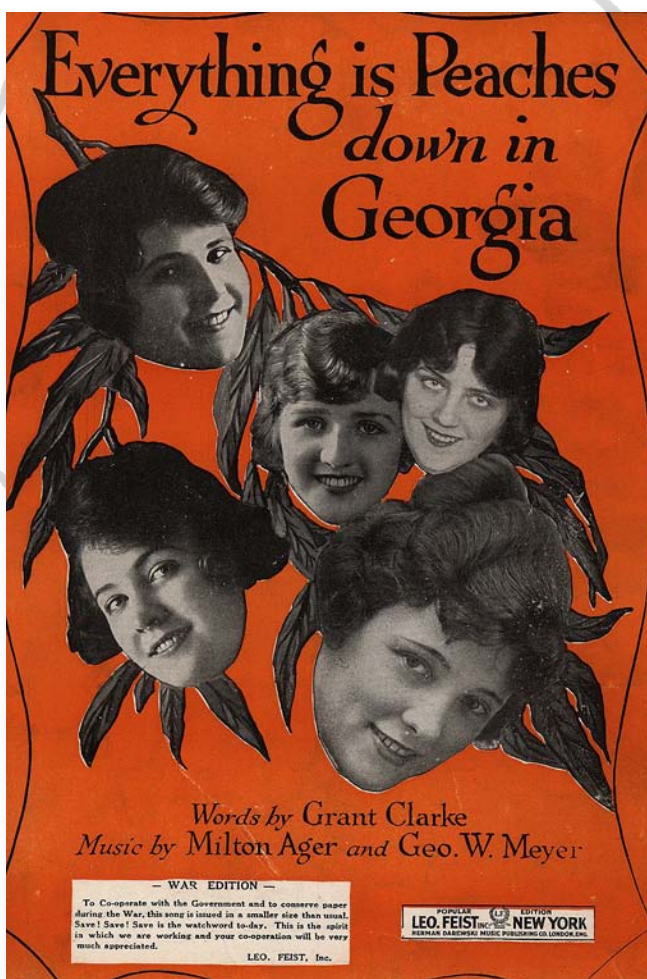
**Peaches  
and other  
crops**







**Figure G-4:** Historical photo of peach harvesting in Peach County (Source: Marilyn Windham (1997). "Peach County: The World's Peach Paradise".)



**Figure G-5:** The peach was so popular as the produce of Georgia that it even spurred songs to itself. (Source: Smithsonian Institute.)





**Figure G-6:** Historical photo of the main participants in the pageant of the 1924 Peach Festival (Source: Marilyn Windham (1997). "Peach County: The World's Peach Paradise".)

Fort Valley's industrial activities began during the 1880s, in parallel to the agricultural boom. They located along and around the railroad tracks, and manufacturing at first products needed for the agricultural production, such as ice, crates, baskets, animal food, and pesticides. Abandoned industry plants remain in Fort Valley as a testament to a by-gone era but also as a source of environmental contamination. Industry slowly shifted from agricultural-related production to other sectors, such as lumber and machine production, and --with the advent of the automobile-- to parts production and vehicle bodies. From these industries, Anthoine Machine Works is noteworthy, having been in continuous family operation since 1885. Also very important is Blue Bird, the well-known builder of school buses, that continues to be one of the major employers in Fort Valley.



## Industry



**Figure G-7:** Anthoine's Machine Works, the longest family-operated business in Fort Valley (Source: Studio.)





**Figure G-8:** The Woolfolk chemical plant, seen in the background, is surrounded by residential areas of low-income population (Source: Studio.)

The strong economic growth at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was reflected in Fort Valley's population growth, which expanded in a few decades almost to the size it is today. A small, main-street downtown emerged to the east of the railroad tracks around a triangular open space that featured the town's water tower, followed farther to the east by residential sectors of spacious Victorian houses of the wealthy, white population. To the north and south, two originally independent communities emerged, Vineville and Ganoville. They housed the laboring African-American population on smaller lots and houses. Paternalistic-minded landholders created these communities by subdividing their land and helping the African-American population to acquire homes. Francis Gano, after whom Ganoville was named, also helped to found on his property the Fort Valley High and Industrial School in 1895, which was to evolve into modern-day Fort Valley State University. It is now a leading African-American rural university in Georgia.



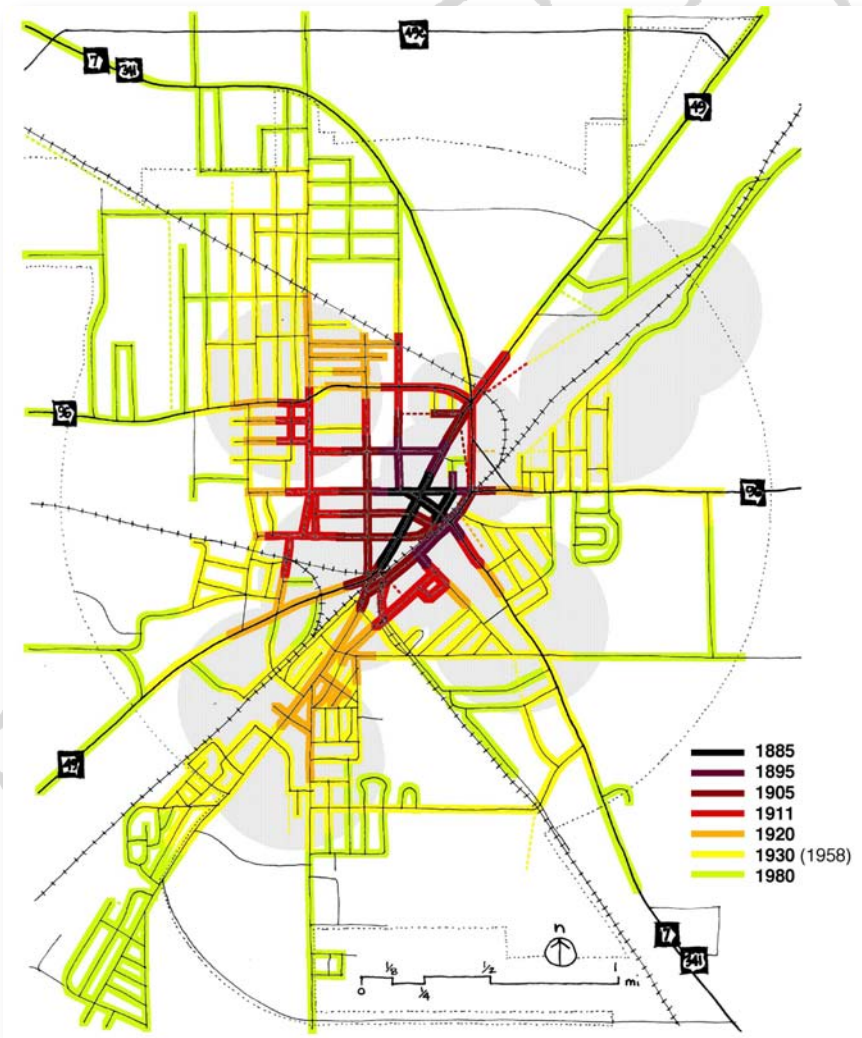
## Growth of the city



**Figure G-9:** Historical photo of the campus of what is now Fort Valley State University, in the 1930s (Source: Marilyn Windham (1997). "Peach County: The World's Peach Paradise".)







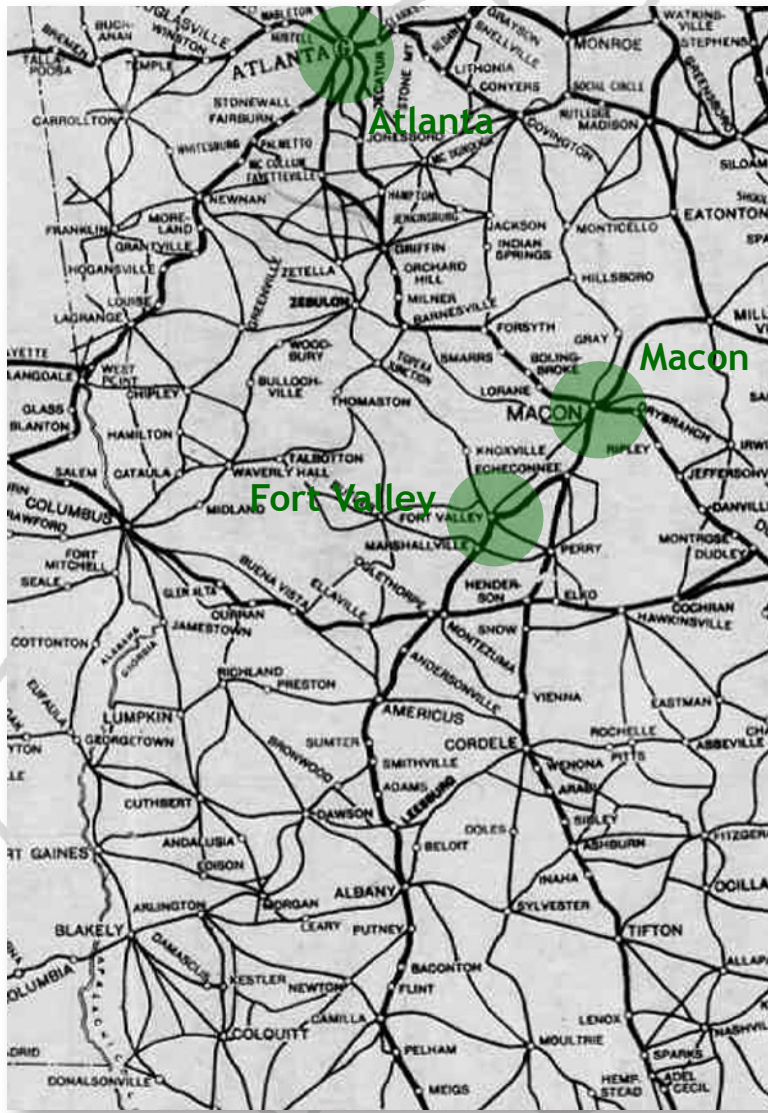
**Figure G-10:** Growth of the street network of Fort Valley. The radial expansion from the railroad depot outward is self-evident. (Source: Studio, based on historic Sanborn maps.)

Fort Valley continued to be the transportation node it had been during the railroad era when the car arrived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the early days of State Highway construction, six highways already converged in the city making it the area's transportation hub. Five of them still meet today at a location known as Five Points, the busiest intersection in town where all commercial activity related to the automobile (gas stations, car dealerships, motels) has been located since the 1920s. As with the railway, economic growth was sustained in Fort Valley by its strategic location within the highway system. This system not only connected the city to the rest of the state, but it brought through-traffic into Peach County. It was during the 1950s, when the I-75 freeway was constructed, that, for the first time since its inception as a trading post and postal stage coach stop, Fort Valley became separated from a major transportation route. This, in turn, reduced its role in the regional economy. This does not necessarily mean a disadvantage, as the highway strip development plaguing other communities has hardly occurred in Fort Valley. Further, Fort Valley's peach and pecan orchards were not sacrificed to strip development. Instead, they characterize and flourish in even the very center of town, bringing a part of the natural landscape into the city.



**The auto-  
mobile**





*Figure G-11: The State Highway map of 1918 already shows the convergence of rural connections in the city. Note the importance of the north-south route through Fort Valley, something that was lost when Interstate 75 was constructed choosing the other route to the east through Perry. (Source: Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, <<http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/rail.html>>)*

## 4. Current Conditions in Fort Valley

While on the surface, contemporary Fort Valley appears little changed, in many ways it is significantly different. A photograph of downtown Main Street today looks much like one from 50 years ago. Transportation still plays a large role in Fort Valley. However, interstate highways have replaced the railroad as the primary mode of passenger and commercial transport. As the highways are external to the city, Fort Valley is isolated from regional auto traffic. With the termination of Woolfolk as a central industry, the orientation of manufacturing and other heavy industry is at



**50 years  
afterwards**







**Figure G-12:** Fort Valley as it once was: Main Street looking eastwards, with the Troutman House as the focal point on the other side of the railroad tracks. (Source: Marilyn Windham (1997). "Peach County: The World's Peach Paradise".)

the edge of the city, which leaves a substantial chasm in the economy and in the town itself. Agriculture, once a staple central to the economy, has also been relegated to the periphery. With the packing plants located outside of the city, the processing aspect of the industry is absent. Meanwhile, progress is evident at Fort Valley State University where the school has evolved from an industrial grammar school to a university offering bachelor's and master's degrees. Unfortunately, traditional southern small town divisions appear to remain: divisions between "town and gown", between black, white and Latino, between income levels, and between industry and the community.



**Figure G-13:** How the boundaries of the Woolfolk site look today. The abandoned plant is just one block away from Downtown's Main Street and the Troutman House. (Source: Studio.)





## Brown- fields and Fort Valley

The Fort Valley we witness today is a shadow of what it once was and can be. The changing global economy, and what is left of a once thriving agricultural and industrial economy have transformed the town of Fort Valley into a brownfield. Citing dust and groundwater contamination from historic industrial uses, such as the Woolfolk Fertilizer operation, Fort Valley defines much of its property by the EPA definition of a brownfield: “real property, and the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse, of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”<sup>12</sup>

Fort Valley’s brownfields, however, can be the development sites of the future. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) supported a local initiative in Fort Valley to reclaim these properties and undertake infill development. The EPA, Fort Valley and scores of development agencies recognize the benefit from redeveloping brownfields. That is, basic infrastructure--physical and social--is already in place to provide Fort Valley’s building blocks for reenergizing its future.



**Figure G-14:** Location of the 37 identified brownfields (in white outline) and potential brownfields based on the Sanborn maps (white translucent areas). (Source: Studio.)



These building blocks exist within the strong institutional influences of Fort Valley: Bluebird, Main Street, Fort Valley State University, and the agricultural industry. At the moment, they are disconnected. However, by making the necessary connections among them, Fort Valley has the opportunity to revitalize and strengthen its economy, its social bonds, and its environmental resources. In addition to harnessing the resources within the confines of Fort Valley's jurisdictional boundaries, the surrounding region offers tremendous opportunity for growth and development.

## 5. Regional Context

Houston County to the east of Peach County has experienced a 24% increase in population. The main economic engine of this county is Warner Robins Air Force Base



**Houston  
County**

|  | Bibb County                          | Houston County                           | Peach County<br>(Fort Valley)   |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Population</b>                      | 153,549                              | 113,391                                  | 23,668<br>(8,005)               |
| <b>Percent Change<br/>(1990-2000)</b>  | -0.20%                               | +24.2                                    | +11.7<br>(-2.2)                 |
| <b>Median<br/>Household<br/>Income</b> | \$34,532                             | \$43,188                                 | \$34,453<br>(\$19,646)          |
| <b>Five Largest<br/>Employers</b>      | Brown & Williamson<br>Tobacco Corp.  | Anchor Glass<br>Container<br>Corporation | Advanced Stores<br>Co. Inc      |
|  | Coliseum Park<br>Hospital Inc.       | Frito-Lay, Inc                           | Blue Bird Body Co.              |
|  | GEICO                                | Houston County<br>Hospital Authority     | Fort Valley State<br>University |
|  | Medical Center of<br>Central Georgia | Cagle's Poultry<br>Processing            | Dan River Inc.                  |
|  | Mercer University                    | WalMart                                  | Southern Orchard<br>Supply Inc. |
| <b>Attractions</b>                     | Georgia Music Hall<br>of Fame        | Warner Robins Air<br>Force Base          | American Camelia<br>Society     |
|  | Georgia Sports Hall<br>of Fame       | Museum of Aviation                       | Lane Packing                    |
|  | Harriet Tubman<br>Museum             | Georgia Aviation<br>Hall of Fame         | Peach Festival                  |

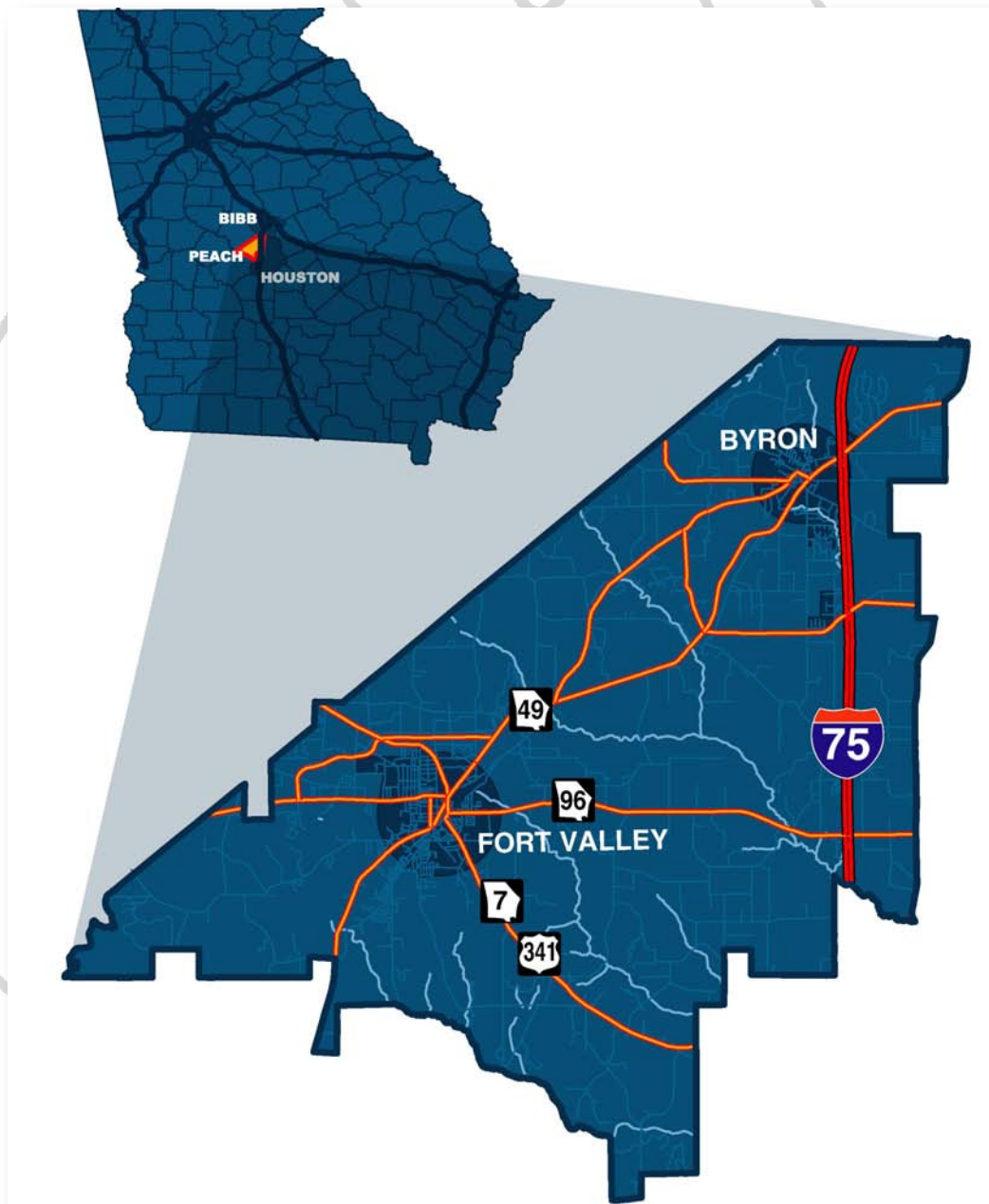
**Table G-1:** Comparison between Peach County and two other adjoining counties (Source: Studio, based on various sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau.)





and its contractors. With well over 13,000 jobs provided between the Air Force Base, the Houston County Hospital Authority and the Houston County Board of Education, an opportunity for Fort Valley to maximize its position exists to support the population and economic growth associated with these facilities.

Likewise, adjacent Bibb County's strengths can be attributed to its institutions of higher education and medicine. As a regional employer, Bibb County is host to major employers such as Macon State College, Wesleyan College, and Mercer University, Coliseum Park Hospital, Medical Center of Central Georgia, Mercer University. Other major employers include Brown & Williamson, GEICO, Kroger Company, Wal-Mart Associates, and YKK USA.



**Figure G-15:** Location of Fort Valley and Peach County in its regional context. (Source: Studio.)



Houston and Bibb County have been successful in capturing much of the service and retail leakage from Peach County. Between Houston Mall, Wal-Mart, movie theaters, recreation and amusement attractions, residents, employees and students from Fort Valley State shop for goods and recreate in these other communities. This is an enormous loss of opportunity that stems from a lack of basic commercial and retail service provision in Fort Valley.

Tourism in neighboring communities also plays a dominant role in their economic development activities. Houston County provides several attractions that may be of interest to local and regional tourists. These include the Robins Air Force Base, Museum of Aviation, Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame, and Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter. Bibb County also offers several points of interest: the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame both played a role in the revitalization of downtown Macon, Bibb's major urban center. Other points of interest include the *Palace of the South*, an Italian Renaissance Revival mansion built in the 1850s and decorated with many museum pieces, the Tubman African American Museum, the Hay House, Sidney Lanier Cottage, and Museum of Arts and Sciences. In addition to these points of interest, Bibb County hosts several events. The most popular is the International Cherry Blossom Festival. Other events include First Night Macon (held on New Year's Eve), Tubman Museum Pan African Festival, and the Georgia State Fair.



**Importance of tourism**

## 6. Fort Valley in the Regional Context

### 6.1 Population

Fort Valley is situated in a rapidly growing region. Over the last decade, the populations of Houston County and Peach County grew by 24.2 and 11.7% respectively. Fort Valley, however, has not felt the same effect of population growth and economic expansion, as has the region. The size of the population, 8,005, represents a decline of 2.2% between 1990 and 2000. Projections for future growth of Peach County indicate a population increase of 7.3%.<sup>13</sup> Helping Fort Valley move beyond its stagnant conditions to capture



**Population decline in Fort Valley**

|                               | number | % of total |
|-------------------------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Total</b>                  | 3,050  | 100%       |
| <b>Family households</b>      | 1,880  | 62%        |
| <b>Nonfamily households</b>   | 1,170  | 38%        |
| <b>Average household size</b> | 2.57   |            |
| <b>Average family size</b>    | 3.2    |            |

**Table G-2:** Basic household indicators for Fort Valley. (Source: 2000 U.S. Census.)



some of this regional growth and nurture its existing population is a key task of its redevelopment efforts.

|                         | number | % of total |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Total</b>            | 8,005  | 100%       |
| <b>Male</b>             | 3,703  | 46%        |
| <b>Female</b>           | 4,302  | 54%        |
| <b>0-19 years</b>       | 2,474  | 31%        |
| <b>20-60 years</b>      | 4,348  | 54%        |
| <b>61+ years</b>        | 1,183  | 15%        |
| <b>White</b>            | 1,769  | 22%        |
| <b>African American</b> | 5,976  | 75%        |
| <b>American Indian</b>  | 30     | 0%         |
| <b>Asian</b>            | 20     | 0%         |
| <b>Pacific Islander</b> | 4      | 0%         |
| <b>Other</b>            | 148    | 2%         |
| <b>2 or more races</b>  | 58     | 1%         |
| <b>Hispanic</b>         | 350    | 4%         |
| <b>Non-hispanic</b>     | 7,655  | 96%        |

**Table G-3:** Basic population indicators for Fort Valley.  
(Source: 2000 U.S. Census.)

## 6.2 Socio-economic status

Fort Valley's current economic status is decidedly weak. With a median household income of \$19,646 (well below the state median household income of \$42,433) and a family poverty rate of 31.8%,<sup>14</sup> Fort Valley is confronted with serious problems. Over 47% of female-headed households claim incomes below the poverty level and almost 50% of those families have children under the age of 18. Single headed households require additional services and opportunities to increase their economic status. These include affordable housing, daycare, employment and training opportunities.

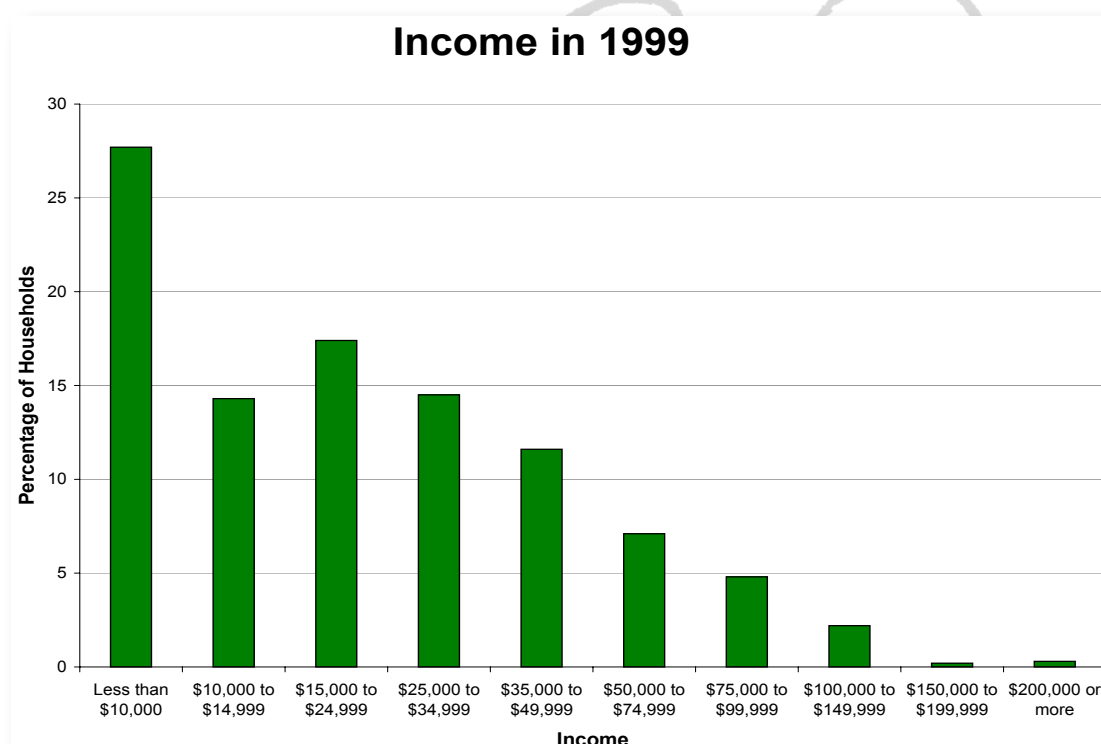
Education plays a major role in the economic forecast of Fort Valley. Education levels for Fort Valley's population require one of two strategies for economic development. With 61.5% of the working age population with a high school diploma or higher and only 13.5% of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher, either the workforce must be educated at a higher level to attract higher skilled jobs, or industrial recruitment should be aimed at current workforce educational levels.

Race cannot be ignored as a historically division in the politics, economics, and social strata of Fort Valley. With an African American population of almost



**Weak  
household  
incomes**





**Figure G-16:** Income breakdown for residents of Fort Valley. (Source: 2000 U.S. Census.)

75% in Fort Valley, there is an observable divide between the power and income balance of African Americans and the white communities. Median household income for blacks is 40% of that for whites, and only half that of the Latino population. Per capita income data paints an even bleaker picture where blacks and Latinos per capita income are \$8,029 and \$9,102 respectively, as compared to white per capita income of \$21,410. Overall, the percent of blacks living below the poverty standard is 46.5%.



**Race plays a role**

Education data show a marked difference between races as well. Persons age 25 or older without a high school diploma or equivalency total 14.4% for whites, but 46.2% for blacks and 88.2% for Latinos. The distribution of high school graduates (or equivalent) is somewhat less pronounced between whites and blacks (37% and 25.1%, respectively). Higher education attainment rates again diverge between whites (48.6%) and blacks (28.7%) and Latinos (4.9%). These figures reinforce the need for extension of adult education and job training opportunities for minorities in these communities, otherwise, this gap will likely continue.



**Differences in education, too**

|                           | Median household income | Per capita income | Persons below poverty level (%) | Children below poverty level (%) | Seniors (65+) below poverty level (%) |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>White</b>              | \$36,250                | \$21,410          | 159 (9.8%)                      | 46 (2.8%)                        | 23 (1.4%)                             |
| <b>African-American</b>   | \$14,275                | \$8,029           | 2,741(46.5%)                    | 932 (15.8%)                      | 226 (3.8%)                            |
| <b>Hispanic or Latino</b> | \$28,906                | \$9,102           | 35 (12.2%)                      | 15 (5.2%)                        | 0 (0.0%)                              |

**Table G-4:** Basic socio-economic indicators for Fort Valley. (Source: 2000 U.S. Census.)



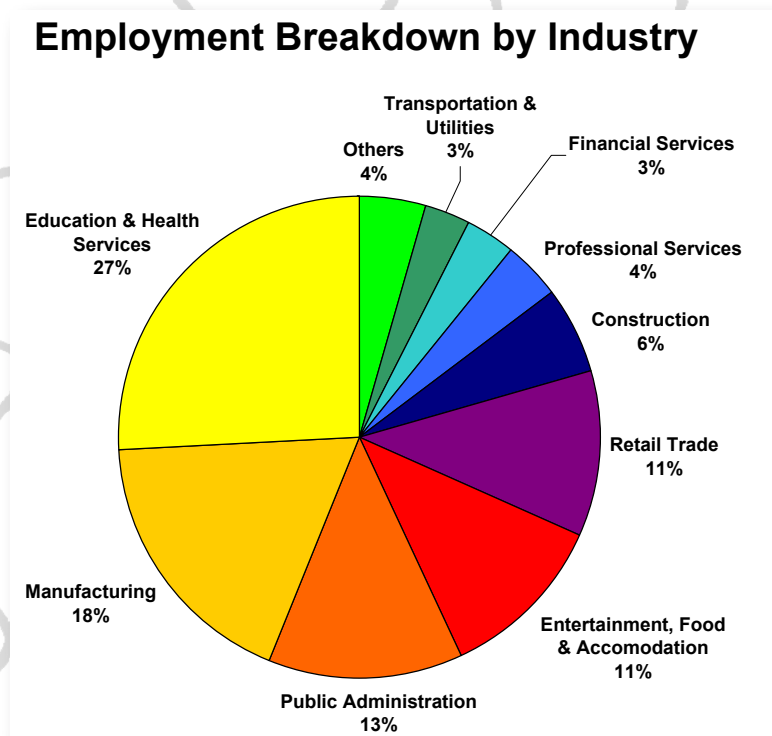
|                               | White        |               | Black        |               | Latino     |               |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                               | number       | % of total    | number       | % of total    | number     | % of total    |
| Less than 9th grade           | 88           | 7.0%          | 463          | 15.2%         | 127        | 88.2%         |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma | 93           | 7.4%          | 941          | 31.0%         | 0          | 0.0%          |
| High school graduate          | 466          | 37.0%         | 762          | 25.1%         | 10         | 6.9%          |
| Some college, no degree       | 297          | 23.6%         | 496          | 16.3%         | 0          | 0.0%          |
| Associate degree              | 27           | 2.1%          | 67           | 2.2%          | 0          | 0.0%          |
| Bachelor's degree             | 182          | 14.5%         | 172          | 5.7%          | 0          | 0.0%          |
| Graduate/professional degree  | 105          | 8.3%          | 137          | 4.5%          | 7          | 4.9%          |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>1,258</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>3,038</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>144</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

**Table G-5:** Education attainment indicators for Fort Valley. (Source: 2000 U.S. Census.)

Long tainted by the environmental injustice caused by the former activities on the Woolfolk Site, this community must be re-engaged and supported as a viable workforce, in providing affordable, quality housing, in engaging community leadership and entrepreneurial activities, and recognizing the unique cultural contributions offered. As mentioned previously, making connections is vital to the strategy of this redevelopment plan. The black-white divide that has pervaded this community must be bridged if Fort Valley is to realize a brighter future.



**Environmental  
inequali-  
ties**



**Figure G-17:** Labor breakdown for workers in Fort Valley. (Source: 2000 U.S. Census.)

## 6.3 Employment

In spite of these divides Fort Valley has benefited from stable large-scale manufacturing, government, and academic institutions. The major employers of Fort Valley and Peach County include Advanced Stores, Co. Inc., Blue Bird Body Co., Dan River, Inc., Fort Valley State University, Peach County Government, Peach County School System, and Southern Orchard Supply. Each of these employers plays a significant role in the formative history of Fort Valley. As well, they offer opportunities to unite various sectors of the economy with the local community.



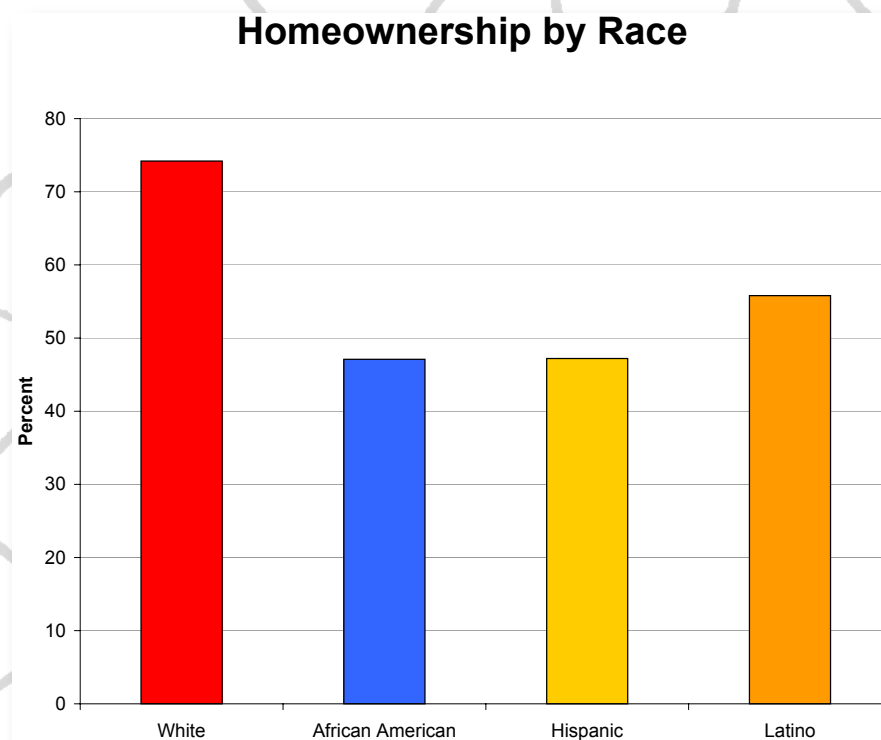
Some  
major  
employers

## 6.4 Housing

While no formal survey was available for this report on substandard housing, interviews and a windshield survey indicate substandard, adequate and affordable housing are concerns for Fort Valley. Vacancy rates, however, are moderate in Fort Valley. Of

|                       | number | % of total |
|-----------------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Total units</b>    | 3,303  | 100%       |
| <b>Occupied units</b> | 3,050  | 92%        |
| - Owner occupied      | 1,393  | 42%        |
| - Renter occupied     | 1,657  | 50%        |
| <b>Vacant units</b>   | 253    | 8%         |
| <b>Other units</b>    | 7      | 0%         |

**Table G-6:** Basic housing indicators for Fort Valley.  
(Source: 2000 U.S. Census.)



**Figure G-18:** Homeownership by race (Source: HUD, 2002.)



the 3,303 housing units in the City, 7.7% of the housing units classified as vacant at the time of the 2000 census. Of those vacancies, 12% are “for sale”, and 45% are rental units.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, there is room for improvement for the condition of the vacant housing. Some housing units have been deemed uninhabitable or substandard. With over 54% of the housing stock classified as renter occupied, the trend toward renter occupied housing in Fort Valley is increasing. Rental units are compatible with student housing, however, for permanent residents of Fort Valley, homeownership should be a priority. Homeownership supports financial responsibility, reinvestment and upkeep of properties, self-esteem and stability of neighborhoods. It creates jobs and supports industries in the construction, remodeling and home-improvement industry. With the average homebuyers (of all races) spending between \$3700 and \$4900 in the first year of homeownership,<sup>16</sup> homeownership supports local businesses in sales of home furnishings, tools and other household related goods.



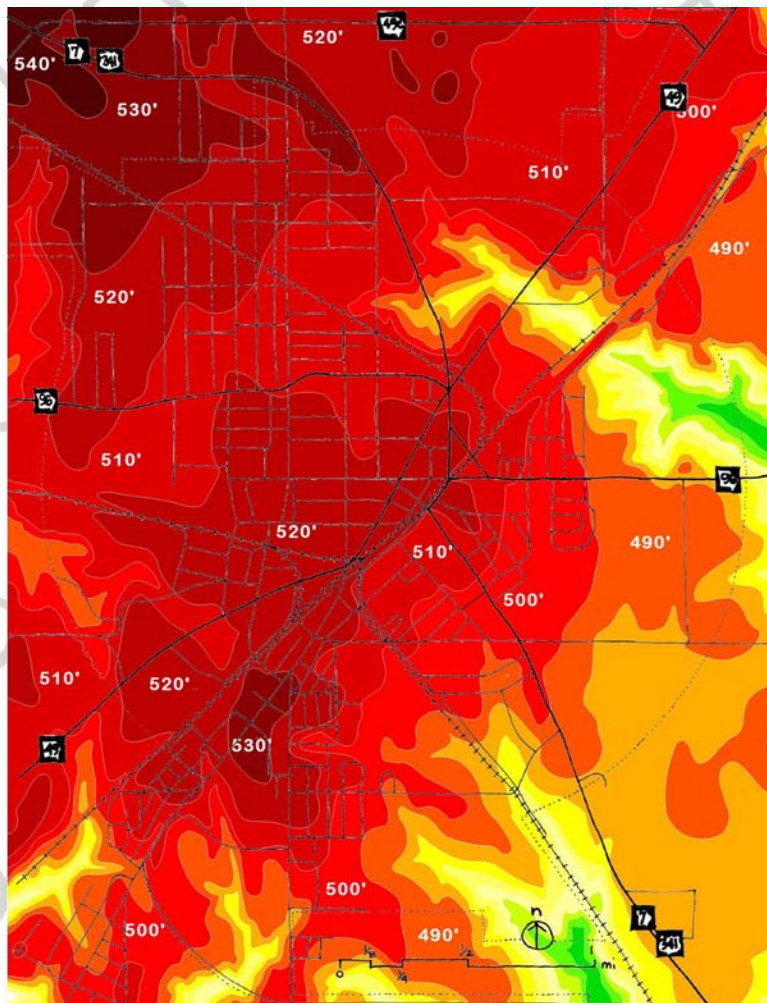
**Vacancies  
low**

## 6.5 Topography

The terrain inside Fort Valley’s city limits is relatively flat, with slopes of less than 3%. Average elevation over sea level is 500 to 520 feet, sloping up towards the northwestern border of town, with a small hump around Fort Valley State University



**Level  
terrain**



**Figure G-19:** Contour lines in Fort Valley (Source: Studio, based on USGS topographical maps.)



which rises to 530 feet. Creeks appear to the east and south of the city, and only the depression to the east (Mossy Creek), perpendicular to the main railroad line, actually makes it considerably into town. This depression is experienced when approaching the city from the north coming from Byron, just before reaching the Blue Bird plant. The road, as well as the railroad, ease the slope through earth banks. It is no wonder that along this creek no development has occurred, being occupied by groves, a cemetery, a landfill, and the city's water treatment plan. The topography of the city is, in sum, very suitable for construction, as slopes are moderate and it is not threatened by flooding. It is also very useful for the introduction of alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycles, as it will be proposed.



**Suitability  
for bikes**

## 6.6 Infrastructure

Streets inside the city were surveyed to understand: (1) the function they serve, (2) their relative size, measured by the number of travel lanes, and (3) the character they exude. In general terms, the city is formed by the overlay of two distinct patterns, one organized in a typical grid oriented towards the cardinal directions, and the other in a radial layout, stemming from major rural highways and the 5 branches of railroads fanning out of the city. Most of the streets in the city have two travel lanes and two-way traffic, although many of the State Routes have four-lane sections. Only GA-49, on the northern access to the city, has a 5-lane layout. Five of the radial routes meet at the most important intersection, Five Points, which is located at the northern end of the city.



**Street  
survey**



**Figure G-20:** Panoramic view of the Five Points intersection, looking north (top) and south (bottom). Note the lack of crossing opportunities for pedestrians and the visual clutter caused by signals, signs and adjoining properties. (Source: Studio.)

The functional divisions selected for the characterization of Fort Valley's streets are:

- *Regional.* The roads in this category serve not only city traffic but are used by regional travelers not necessarily bound for Fort Valley; all of the six State Routes are of this type.
- *City.* These streets are used primarily by residents of Fort Valley to get from



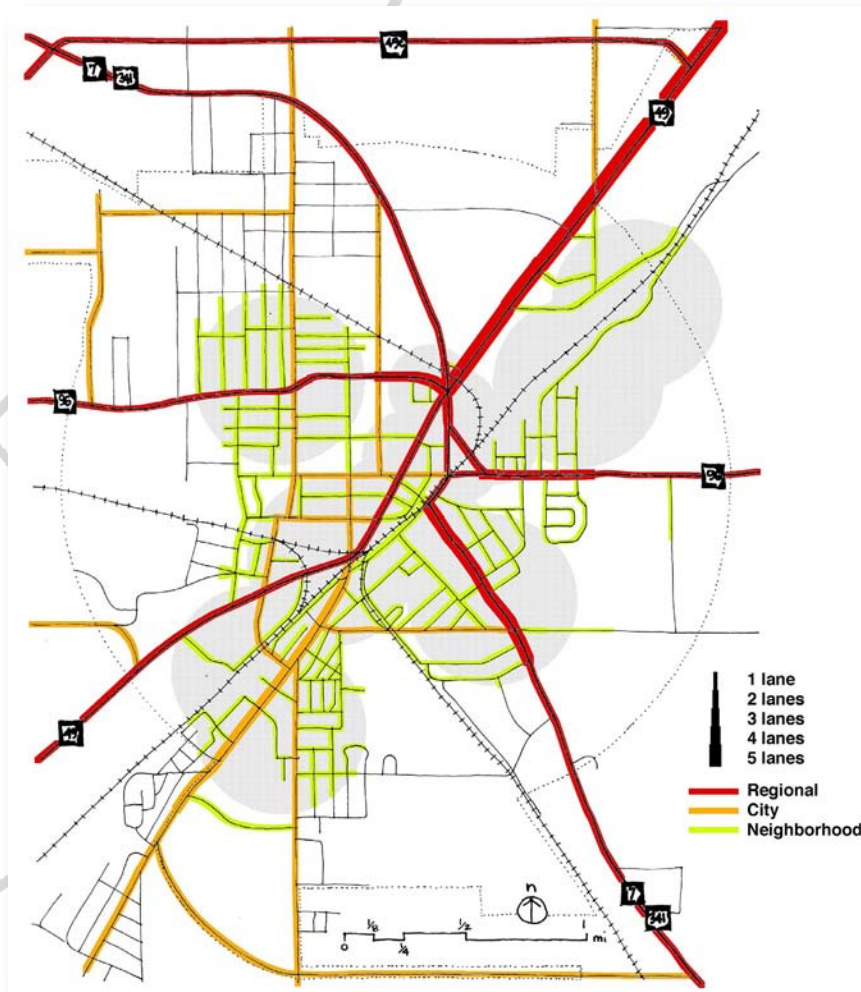
**Function  
of streets**





one part of the city to another. As such, they are usually straight, communicate to the regional routes and extend for a long distance, usually for more than half a mile.

- *Neighborhood.* Most of the streets in Fort Valley fit into this class; they are short stretches of streets, usually narrow, that are used primarily by people traveling to properties abutting onto the same street. Neighborhood streets can be, but are not necessarily residential.



**Figure G-21:** Street classification by function. (Source: Studio.)

With respect to their character, Fort Valley was found to have streets falling into one of the six types described below:

- *Green rural.* A rural atmosphere predominates and greenery is omnipresent, although some very low density building might exist along the road. This kind of road is still encountered in many places in Fort Valley, even in proximity to the Five Points intersection.
- *Green residential.* On these streets there is still a lot of greenery, but a denser settlement pattern of residential use is evident. The land is not used for agricultural purposes; fences and other boundary signs are apparent. Green residential streets are scattered all around town, and virtually all residential



**Character  
of streets**



areas abut onto such streets.

- *Clustered institutional.* The use is predominantly institutional grouped together in complexes occupying more than an average parcel; there is an attempt to maintain a landscaped and civic environment which may be at odds with the provision of parking. Clustered institutional streets are sprinkled around town, with no specific spatial location pattern.
- *Dense commercial.* Old commercial areas provide two- or more story buildings with no setback and a buildout of 100% of the lot frontage, with primarily retail uses on the ground floor. In Fort Valley, this street type is concentrated in the few blocks around Main and Church Streets.
- *Transitional strip.* Unlike a typical big-city commercial strip, this street type in Fort Valley is a mixed-use, pre-zoning street that is slowly evolving into a strip, but still has some residential and other uses traditionally not associated with it. The primary transitional strip is Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to the southeast, but portions of Camellia, Vineville, and others are also included.
- *Gray industrial.* This label identifies older industrial sites, abandoned or in use, where concrete surfaces, chain link fences, and metal sheeting dominate the landscape. Streets with this character in Fort Valley are usually located around the railroad tracks, as it is here where industry originated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

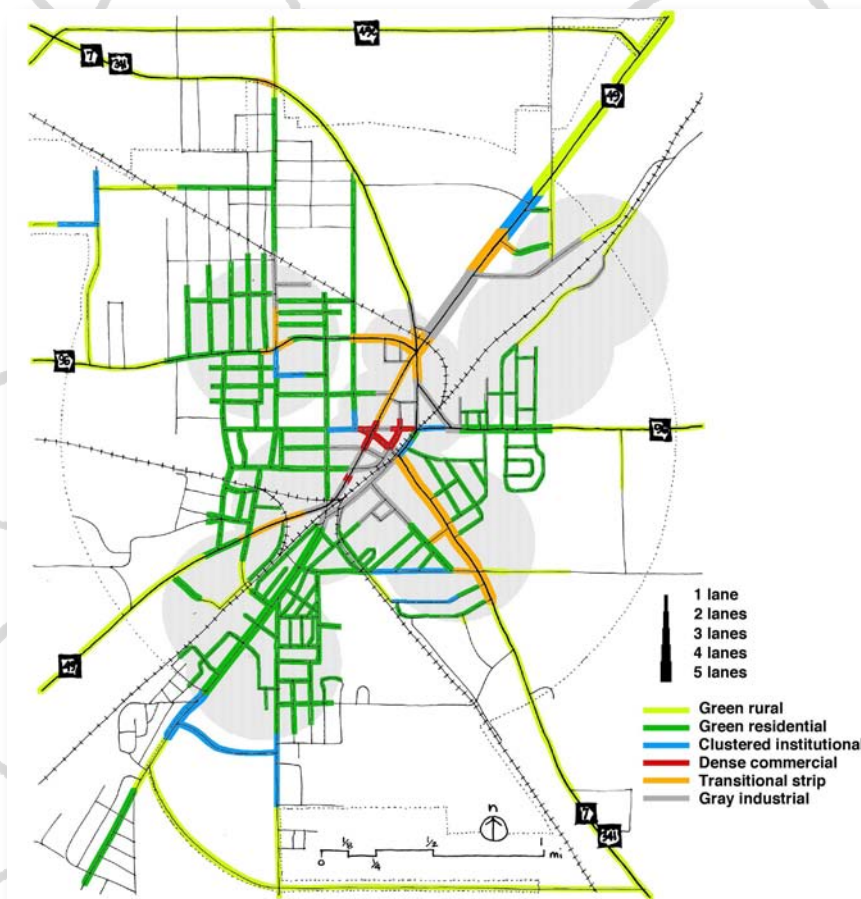
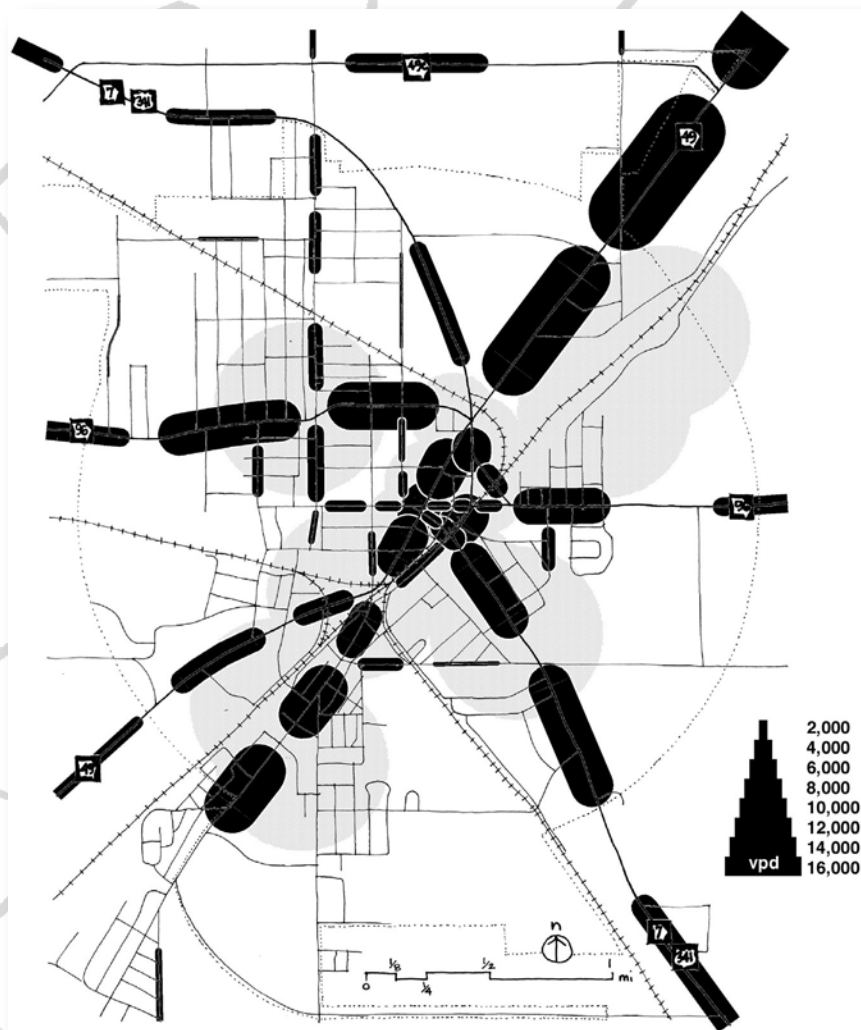


Figure G-22: Street classification by street character. (Source: Studio.)

Traffic conditions, in comparison to bigger cities, are not a major concern to Fort Valley, but some problematic situations do occur because of the frequent railroad crossings (closed due to freight trains movement through the city), and also because of the concentration of all State Roads at the Five Points Intersection. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that it is precisely the oblique crossings of the railroads that give Fort Valley its uniqueness. As it should be expected, highest volumes occur on State Routes, although there are significant variations between them. The most trafficked route is GA-49 to the north, with about 16,000 vehicles per day (vpd),<sup>17</sup> that links Fort Valley and the surrounding region with Interstate 75 twelve miles away. The volumes in the other radial routes range between 2,900 and 5,700 vpd. Interestingly, the volumes on State University Drive (11,700 vpd) are substantially greater, which indicates the importance of the University in the city. Other city street traffic counted by the Georgia Department of Transportation have marginal values, reflecting the relatively low impact of traffic on everyday life in the city.

## Traffic volumes



**Figure G-23:** Daily traffic volumes on major streets. (Source: Studio, based on information by the GDOT.)

In regard to other forms of communication, Fort Valley is in the enviable position of providing high bandwidth telecommunications infrastructure throughout its community. Through the Georgia Public Web Network, the Fort Valley Utilities

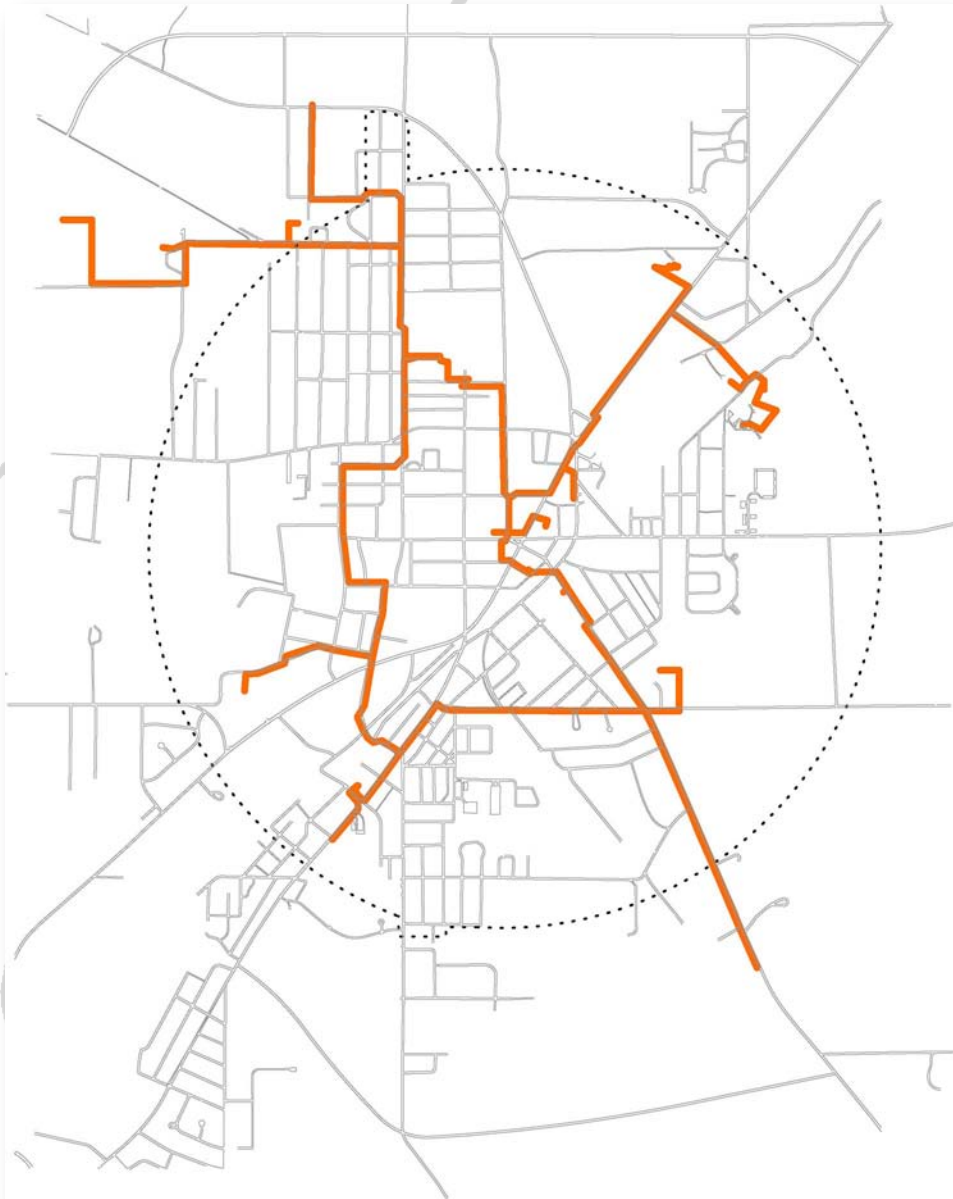




Commission installed fiber optic in a ring around the town and with spokes through the city for maximum coverage. Initially intended for city utilities and services, Fort Valley's fiber infrastructure is an attractive commodity for businesses requiring high speed data transmission. Fort Valley also offers comprehensive telecommunications infrastructure through its wireless technology. This new technology allows for transmission of data without line of sight. Both fiber and wireless offer a competitive advantage for Fort Valley in its business development and recruitment efforts.



**Optic fiber  
a plus for  
Fort Valley**



**Figure G-24:** Fiber optic network in Fort Valley (Source: Werner Kenneth, Utility Commission of Fort Valley.)



## 7. Development Tools

Based on the aforementioned characteristics of Fort Valley, this section will provide a series of development tools and guiding principles for redevelopment activities. The Studio identified 3 major economic development strategies, supplemented by essential community development activities. The three major strategies include: university based retail and service development, agricultural biotechnology, and heritage tourism. Essential community development strategies include housing, education, and infrastructure development.



**Economic development strategies**

### 7.1 Universities as economic engines

Fort Valley is fortunate to have within its community an institution of higher education. Universities provide the impetus for economic development in three ways: a captive audience of housing, retail goods, and services consumers; commercial procurement generators; and neighborhood rehabilitation agencies.

The consumption patterns of the students, faculty and staff are perhaps the most overlooked internal resource for Fort Valley. With approximately 190 faculty, 170 staff, and over 3,000 students, the potential impact of consumer spending on the local economy is significant. However, interviews and surveys with Fort Valley State University (FVSU) faculty and students<sup>18</sup> revealed a dearth of nearby shopping, services, restaurants, entertainment and housing. Data results provided the following insight:



**Potential of students and faculty**

#### Housing

The majority of the faculty live outside of Fort Valley. There simply is not the available quality housing stock, quality of primary and secondary education and sense of community within the city to attract faculty. Students reside on and off campus, but desire better accommodations. These housing needs could translate into a stable, economically sufficient population for Fort Valley as faculty are likely to engage in homeownership and community building, whereas students provide a steady stream of reliable renters. FVSU plans to increase its on-campus housing;<sup>19</sup> however, some students will continue to desire off-campus accommodations.



**No adequate housing**

In addition to increasing the availability of housing for the faculty, staff and students of Fort Valley State University, the city should make efforts to correct the existing substandard and dilapidated housing stock. The City can partner with FVSU, as cities have done with universities elsewhere to generate neighborhood. Whether through the HUD Historically Black Colleges and Universities revitalization program, as previously sought by FVSU, or as a general initiative supported by private donations, FVSU can follow the lead of universities in cities across the country that are supporting community redevelopment with cooperation from their host cities. For example, Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts formed the University Park Partnership. This partnership between community groups and business organizations sought to revitalize Clark area neighborhoods. The university refurbished dilapidated and abandoned homes, resold them to area residents and subsidized mortgages



**City involvement**



for buyers. The university also opened a secondary public school that serves as a development program for teacher education.<sup>20</sup> Other examples of extraordinary, but feasible redevelopment efforts are available in the appendix.

*Recommendations:* Fort Valley should regard faculty, student and staff housing needs as an economic priority for the City. These relatively affluent populations bring much needed stability, disposable income and strong sense of place to the community. An increase in homeownership rates by this group would help to reduce traffic congestion and miles traveled, support local businesses including restaurants, grocery stores and other services. Beyond the basic housing stock, these populations also demand better educational facilities and entertainment venues. A 'University Neighborhood' featuring faculty housing and charter school may be one approach to encouraging professionals. The people who work, live or learn in Fort Valley are the backbone of the community. As such, the Mayor's Task Force on Housing should perform a more in-depth investigation into the housing needs of FVSU employees and students. In conjunction with efforts to provide for faculty, student and staff housing, FVSU should partner with the City and continue to seek HBCU HUD funding for surrounding neighborhood revitalization. This redevelopment plan can provide supporting documentation for the larger vision and potential of the community.



**Housing  
should be  
priority**

### **Retail and commercial service needs**

In addition to generating demand for quality housing, universities create demand for small business development through expenditures to meet institutional needs. Personal expenditures by students, staff and faculty also comprise a significant market. Institutional procurement policies often overlook or exclude local vendors. Large-scale efforts to support and encourage local entrepreneurship are cited in a number of universities that recognized the need for neighborhood revitalization in their communities.<sup>21</sup> Basic services such as paper suppliers, office products, and books are the largest ticket items for universities, other than special contracting services. A review of the procurement records from Fort Valley State revealed an exceptionally limited reliance on locally produced goods and services.



**Universi-  
ties create  
demand for  
products**

*Recommendations:* Fort Valley State University should consider a policy similar to those developed at other academic institutions (e.g., the University of Pennsylvania) that support local vendors offering comparable quality and prices. FVSU should consider the larger impacts of their purchasing decisions, and the benefits of purchasing locally (i.e., avoided transportation costs, local community development, relationship with local businesses).



**Support  
of local  
vendors**

### **Student spending**

Student's discretionary income expenditure habits should also be recognized as a significant contribution to the local economy. Studies estimate that students spend on average between \$169 and \$287 per month on discretionary items. At Fort Valley State, although less than half the students own their own cars thus limiting their mobility, most of them find transportation to purchase goods from Houston and Bibb County. This represents a lost economic opportunity for Fort Valley. As a conservative estimate of student spending suggests capturing student



**Students  
spend  
\$200/mo.**





dollars could bring approximately \$500,000 into the local economy per year. Local services geared toward student needs, such as a coffee shop, pizza parlor, sundry store, bookshop, Internet cafe, or restaurants. Previous studies suggest that outlets that offer “small-ticket purchases like food, beverages, books, music and video flowers, are more likely to thrive in university communities than auto dealerships, appliance stores and other durable goods retailers.”<sup>22</sup> With over 3,000 students and almost 400 faculty and staff, these services would be well supported.



**Local  
services  
needed**

*Recommendations:* Fort Valley should consider a strategy of allowing for small restaurants/carts to service university food needs. Students or local residents might run these ventures as a stepping-stone to small business ownership. Partnership with the Rural Outreach Development Center, the Downtown Development Authority, and other small business supporters would provide the necessary expertise and support in securing permits, licenses, and funding.

### **Commercialization of technology**

Associated with the University is the opportunity for commercialization of technology. Richard Rosan, President of the Urban Land Institute, acknowledged the role of innovative universities and their contributions to local economies via technology transfer, workforce development and lucrative spin-off companies.<sup>23</sup> In the case of Fort Valley, the strengths of its agricultural industry and the research facilities for agricultural biotechnology (ag-biotech) offer the foundations for commercialization and production of ag-biotech advancements. Biotechnology is one of the fastest growing sectors in the US economy. As the State of Georgia has identified biotechnology as a target sector for recruitment, the support for growing biotechnology companies can be leveraged. The critical components identified for developing and sustaining biotech startups include:<sup>24</sup>



**Universi-  
ties sup-  
port local  
economy**



**Biotech-  
nology**

- Strong academic research institutions conducting basic research in the biosciences.
- Access to early-stage capital.
- Successful transfer of government-funded basic research for product commercialization.
- Specialized facilities, including wet laboratory space and specialized equipment.
- Highly skilled workforce.
- Stable and supportive public policy structure.

Fort Valley possesses many of the qualities cited above. From its inception as an agricultural land grant college, Fort Valley State developed a strong record in agricultural biotechnology research. Internally, the networks, research and resources are available to further develop biotechnology. Externally, the location of Fort Valley in prime agricultural territory, and with an abundance of agricultural land, offers an unparalleled opportunity for ag-biotech. As well, the presence of the superfund site and other brownfields offer a working laboratory within the community. Current research funded at Fort Valley State is centered on horticulture and phytoremediation. Both areas have potential to spawn commercial production. Working closely with the local agricultural producers of peaches, pecans, cotton and peanuts, researchers have the facilities at FVSU to pursue advancements in these fields. These



**Fort Valley  
ideal for  
biotech**



include producing heartier plant varieties that are drought and disease resistant, and can also extend the lifespan of agricultural fields. Perhaps more significantly and certainly more poignantly for Fort Valley Brownfield Redevelopment, are the advancements being made in the field of phytoremediation. Phyto remediating plants are those that can absorb or tolerate soils contaminated with toxins such as lead, arsenic, nickel and cobalt.

*Recommendations:* Fort Valley as a whole (University, City and County) should seek to nurture its budding ag-biotech industry through the research conducted at Fort Valley State. As it highly unlikely that a large biotech manufacturer would locate in this area, small companies or subsidiaries of large companies may be enticed to locate in Fort Valley given the geographic and research advantages of this region. The potential of large-scale plant production using the vast agricultural land available here combined with the research capabilities of the university; its research station and the researchers at FVSU make Fort Valley a likely candidate. Alternatively, small research facilities that capitalize on the expertise from FVSU staff and the training of its students are feasible. Likewise, a combination of the two approaches should be pursued.

Roles for key institutions include Fort Valley State's continued support for ag-biotech research and the development of relations with the University of Georgia Technology Transfer Office for a commercialization strategy; the Peach County Development Authority providing necessary marketing and funding opportunities to interested parties; and the City of Fort Valley and Peach County's role improving local business climate. Successful ag-biotech development is dependent upon strong interconnections among the above institutions as well as efforts to promote skills and employment opportunities for the local workforce.

## 7.2 Tourism

Tourism comes in many forms. Three forms focused on for Fort Valley are agricultural tourism, manufacturing tourism, and cultural tourism.

### Agritourism

Agritourism, or the “commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generate supplemental income for the owner,”<sup>25</sup> is one possibility for Fort Valley. The peach is universally associated with the State of Georgia. As the seat of Peach County, and the historical Georgia home of the peach growing and packing industry, Fort Valley is poised to take advantage of its history with the peach to attract tourists to the region. To augment the peach tourism market, the importance of the pecan orchards to defining a definitive sense of place to Fort Valley should be underscored. A micro-scale agri-tourism operation already exists at the Lane Packing Company/Southern Orchards and American Camellia Society. However, Fort Valley can seek to augment this approach.

*Recommendations:* Agritourism activities might include educational tours and processing demonstrations of peach and pecan farms, historical recreations of agricultural processes, expanded festivals, biking or walks through the orchards



**Involve-  
ment of all  
sectors**



**Peaches  
bring  
tourists**



with “pack your own picnics” or food sales along the route. Market Fort Valley as a destination for fresh produce either by pick your own or fresh produce stands. In recognition, however, that Fort Valley alone may not have the resources or magnetism to draw regional and national tourists, a regional cooperative should be pursued. This cooperative could include day tours, regional circuit tours, or shared resources for the construction of a regional agricultural tourism facility.

### **Manufacturing tourism**

Industrial heritage tourism is yet another possibility for Fort Valley. Nostalgia, in particular, could be a selling point for this type of tourism. The yellow school bus is a symbol of education throughout the United States. Further, the emerging recreational vehicle tourism industry is growing. As discussed in the Northern District section, the presence of the Wanderlodge Resort is an opportunity for Blue Bird to celebrate its heritage while providing another facet to the integrated sense of identity for Fort Valley.

### **Cultural tourism**

Finally, cultural tourism satisfies both local and regional interests. Supporting the historical roots of Fort Valley are tourism based around historic homes and neighborhoods, academic advancement, Civil War history, railroad history and history of the dust worker from the Woolfolk Chemical Operation years.

From the grand mansions clustered around College Street, Central Avenue, and West Church Street to the Ganoville and Vineville neighborhoods, the architecture and history of these areas are unique attractions. Packaged as part of a larger tourism strategy, these neighborhoods provide the history of the town. The history of Fort Valley State University as it evolved from a grammar school to a leading Historic Black University is also an attraction (see the South District for more discussion). Although no Civil War battles were fought in Fort Valley, the Andersonville Trail traverses through town and can be packaged as part of a regional historic loop bringing visitors into Fort Valley. Rail enthusiasts would be thrilled at the sight of three depots on the tracks - freight, passenger and switching station.

*Recommendations:* To capture the various tourist interests, the Studio proposes a historical marker program as well as a small historical venue. The heritage marker program would consist of plaques at various historical sites and events around the city. The markers could be included as part of a historic walking tour or simply to augment the existing brownfield redevelopment improvements, lending more interest to each site. Each marker should celebrate Fort Valley’s history as well as acknowledge egregious circumstances when appropriate. As the scars of the former Woolfolk operations are indelibly imprinted on the history of Fort Valley, the Studio particularly supports the erection of a commemorative statue or other reminder of the sacrifices of the dust house worker. In an effort to promote present and future environmental justice, Fort Valley needs to bear witness to its past history of environmental injustice. To do so, conveys the civic integrity of Fort Valley.

The historical venue may incorporate the industrial and cultural heritage of the



**Wander-  
lodges and  
tourism**



**History  
sells, too**



**Options  
for Fort  
Valley**



**Historical  
markers**





town, which are inseparable in some respects. In addition, commercial enterprises that support heritage tourism may be feasible, at a limited scale.

## 7.3 Other essential strategies

### Housing

Housing as presented earlier in this chapter is a necessary focus of city-wide development initiatives. While there are specific recommendations in this report for district area housing projects, the Studio supports the Mayor's Task Force on Housing as a step toward providing affordable and quality housing for all of Fort Valley's citizens. These housing options should be comprehensive in nature, supporting the full range of needs of Fort Valley's most needy population. The City's feminization of poverty (47% of all female headed households in Fort Valley have incomes below the poverty line) points to the need for housing options that include daycare facilities, job training opportunities and access to public transportation. Integration of subsidized housing units into mixed income and mixed-use neighborhoods will provide social and economic advantages. The simple presence of positive role models, improved access to basic goods and services, quality housing and safe and stable neighborhoods are these advantages that can help households rise above the poverty level.



**Affordable  
and quality  
housing a  
priority**

Ridding the city of blighted properties falls under the housing initiatives. Fort Valley has recently begun to pursue tax delinquencies. Through the powers granted by the State of Georgia, Fort Valley may choose to exercise eminent domain powers, condemn tax delinquent properties, and slate them for redevelopment through processes that prioritize rehabilitation when possible or demolition. Demolition should be seen as the last resort as it contributes to an irreconcilable loss of community character. When demolitions occur, deconstruction may be used as a strategy to recover materials for reuse within the community. Deconstruction, or the systematic disassembly of buildings and reuse, resale, or recycling of their component parts, has been shown to aid in community development.<sup>26</sup> Providing income from sales, or building materials for sale at pennies on the dollar, the reclamation of building materials is a source of community redevelopment worth pursuing.



**Tax delin-  
quency**

Assembly of land parcels for redevelopment may follow from tax delinquency property acquisition. Fort Valley has the ability to form a land bank authority. Land banking authorities acquire property and with their powers as granted by the state and/or local government, they can clear properties of tax debt. These properties are then assembled to support larger development projects.<sup>27</sup> Fort Valley may consider using the powers of a land banking authority in any of the development projects recommended in this report.



**Land  
banking**

### Education

Education is an essential strategy already recognized by Fort Valley. With the satellite campus of the Middle Georgia Technical College, Fort Valley has undertaken a crucial initiative for supporting its adult population. The Peach County School district, however, requires attention and/or modification to facilitate the future success of Fort Valley. Investments of businesses, parents and community



leaders in terms of time, finances and resources are always needed. Fort Valley may consider the pursuit of a charter school or University school as an additional strategy. Quality education is a main consideration in business relocation and faculty housing choices. The poor quality of Fort Valley's primary and secondary schools is a major deterrent to the City's future development.

### **Infrastructure development**

Fort Valley is supported by a number of agencies that can facilitate the implementation of its redevelopment plan. All stakeholders must be involved in the project planning processes. These stakeholders bring valuable perspectives, expertise and resources. Formalized institutions are stakeholders and provide opportunities largely untapped to date. The Studio recommends further exploration of the capabilities of the Downtown Development Authority/Main Street Program. The Authority has a wide array of incentives it can offer in addition to its existing façade, rent abatement and design programs. The DDA is entrusted with the following (selected) powers (OCGA 36-42-8):

- To make and execute contracts and other agreements, such as contracts for construction, lease, or sale of projects or agreements to finance projects.
- To purchase and own property, real or personal, and to sell or otherwise dispose of property, lease, or rent property. The authority's property is tax-exempt.
- To finance projects by loan, grant, or lease, or otherwise.
- To finance projects using revenue bonds or other obligations of authority.
- To borrow money.
- To apply for and receive governmental grants, loans, loan guarantees, or other financial assistance.
- To receive and use city tax monies. (The city can levy a tax up to three mills for the support of the authority.)
- To employ an executive director for the downtown revitalization efforts.
- To prepare plans for the downtown area or to hire others to prepare plans.
- To exercise any power of public or private corporations under state law, which does not conflict with the authority's public purpose.
- To serve as an urban redevelopment agency under the Urban Redevelopment Law.
- To serve as a redevelopment agency under the Redevelopment Powers Law.
- To contract with a city government to carry out City Business Improvement District services in a downtown.
- To acquire real property through eminent domain (subject to the approval of the City and the meeting of other requirements).



**Extension of activities of existing institutions**



**Powers of the DDA**



With this arsenal, the Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority can exercise its powers to assist in the Brownfield Redevelopment Program.

The Peach County Industrial Development Authority is yet another resource for Fort Valley. With its (selected) powers to (OCGA 36-62-6):

- make and execute contracts and other instruments necessary to exercise the powers of the authority;
- receive and administer gifts, grants, and devises of any property and to administer trusts;
- acquire, by purchase, gift, or construction, any real or personal property desired to be acquired as part of any project or for the purpose of improving, extending, adding to, reconstructing, renovating, or remodeling any project or part thereof already acquired or for the purpose of demolition to make room for such project or any part thereof;
- sell, lease, exchange, transfer, assign, pledge, mortgage, dispose of, or grant options for any real or personal property or interest therein for any such purposes;
- dispose of any real property for fair market value or below, regardless of prior development of such property as a project,
- mortgage, convey, pledge, or assign any properties, revenues, income, tolls, charges, or fees owned or received by the authority;
- acquire, accept, or retain equitable interests, security interests, or other interest in any property, real or personal;
- construct, acquire, own, repair, remodel, maintain, extend, improve, and equip projects;
- borrow money and issue its revenue bonds and bond anticipation notes
- expend for the promotion of industry, agriculture, and trade within its area of operations any funds of the authority determined by the authority to be in excess of those needed for the other corporate purposes of the authority.



## Powers of the PCIDA

Peach County Development Authority can assist in the recruitment and development of the ag-biotech industry as well as other Brownfield Redevelopment Projects.

The Peach County Chamber of Commerce's focus on recruitment and retention of businesses and its commitment to quality education offer another agency for cooperative efforts.<sup>28</sup>



## Other agencies

The Rural Business Outreach Institute is another development agency to assist in these redevelopment efforts. The Institute can aid small business to overcome the identified weaknesses in small business development concerning, access to technology, inclusion of underserved individuals in economic systems, location of available capital and credit, tax and investment assistance, marketing strategies and resources to study and analyze economic trends.<sup>29</sup> In sum, the Rural Business Outreach Institute has the capacity to serve as the advocate for the traditionally underserved populations of Fort Valley.

Overall, the development tools for the city-wide development projects are





available and need only dialogue between stakeholders. To realize their full potential, the next level of city-wide initiatives are specific projects that require attention and resources.

## 8. Overview of Proposed Projects



**Figure G-25:** Location of the 34 proposed projects that fall into one of the three districts. Additionally, there are 4 citywide projects that are applied throughout Fort Valley. (Source: Studio.)

Taking into account the information outlined above, personal insights of the visits undertaken, the location of old brownfields, and the location of the current brownfields, the Studio produced a list of 38 specific projects that should be the primary aim of the city and the inhabitants of Fort Valley. In contrast to the development tools of the previous section, which propose strategies to implement changes, projects are distinct and action-oriented; in other words, the project list is nothing more than a menu of actions to take on. In order to ensure enough flexibility, most of the

projects can be targeted individually from each other, so that unanticipated conditions for one project do not stop the whole process of change towards the attainment of the city vision. Depending on their location, projects can fall into any of these four areas of intervention, three of which correspond to the districts already introduced:

- *North District projects* (12). Interventions on the northern edge of town, many of them related to the dominant facility in this sector, the Bluebird factory. They are discussed in part II of the report.
- *Central District projects* (10). All those proposals in and around the downtown area of Fort Valley, which are dominated by the existence of the abandoned Woolfolk plant. They are dealt with in detail in part III of the report.
- *South District projects* (12). Proposed interventions in the southern part of town, particularly impacted by Fort Valley State University facility and its students and faculty. They are examined in part IV of the report.
- *Citywide projects* (4). All these interventions have an overarching impact on the city and are implemented not only for each of the three districts, but also in the rest of Fort Valley. They are discussed in detail in section 9 of this part of the report.

Obviously, all of the 38 proposed projects are very different in nature; some involve physical improvement of a site, while others require only an administrative action; some need huge investments, while others can be implemented by only a nominal cost; and some can be put into effect right away, while others have to clear legal, consensus and other hurdles. In order to make comparisons between the projects themselves easier, the Studio proposed a unified ‘summary matrix’, which include the following 14 indicators:

- *Project number*. Each project gets a unique identifier; furthermore, the identifier also shows to which district the project corresponds – **B** for the North District (Bluebird), **D** for the Central District (Downtown), **U** for the South District (University), and **G** for the overarching, citywide projects (General). For example, **U7** would indicate the seventh project for the South District.
- *Project name*. Since the project number does not readily make evident the intervention itself, each project gets a specific name, consisting of no more than 6 words.
- *Project type*. There are three broad categories used to typify the project: ‘Administrative’ (meaning non-spatial actions), ‘Site improvement’ (meaning actions in a private property), and ‘Public space improvement’ (meaning actions in the public realm).
- *Impact of town*. This indicator presents the probable impact in terms of the advancement towards the vision that the project will have on Fort Valley as a whole, ranging from ‘Very low’ to ‘Very high’.
- *Impact on district*. As above, it indicates the probable impact of the project, but for the vision for the specific district, ranked in the same way.
- *Consensus level*. Again ranked from ‘Very low’ to ‘Very high’, this indicator shows how much public support for the project might be expected.
- *Implementation potential*. The indicator shows how easy it is to commence a project supposing that all needed funds are available. Ranked the same



## Location of projects



## The ‘summary matrices’



way as the indicators above.

- *Timeframe.* It suggests the time limit when the project should be completed, according to the need and the expected conditions in Fort Valley.
- *Financial feasibility.* It indicates whether the project requires great amount of financial resources ('Very low' feasibility) up to whether the project cost is only nominal ('Very high' feasibility).
- *Funding sources.* This indicator shows specific financing institutions for each project; when no specific one is known, 'Public', 'Private', or 'Non-profit' is indicated.
- *Sectors involved.* Indicated by one or more of the three categories stated in the previous bullet, this indicator shows who is involved in making the particular project happening, regardless of whether they are funding it or not.
- *Main interventions.* Up to three actions or specific changes are listed here that are essential for the project to happen in the way intended, characterizing it with more specificity than the project name can.
- *Justification.* Up to three primary reasons of why the project is important for the district and for Fort Valley.
- *Prerequisite projects.* Some projects require that others happen first in order to commence; they are listed by stating their project number.

Many of these indicators are highly subjective, as it is very difficult to determine, for example, when a project ceases to have a 'very high' impact on the district and instead has only a 'high' impact. Nonetheless, a detailed explanatory list of each of the ranges of these indicators was compiled for all participants, in order to achieve the highest uniformity possible throughout all projects. Here it is:



### Ranges for ranking projects

#### **Impact on town / Impact on district**

- 'Very low': The project will have a minimal direct impact on the town/district if implemented; for most people other than the ones directly involved in it will be unnoticeable, yet it advances a small step towards the main vision for the town/district.
- 'Low': The project will have a small positive impact on the town/district; its existence can be noticed only to close neighbors or involved citizens and it moves in the direction of goal attainment for town/district, but this might not be self-evident for the majority of the population.
- 'Medium': The project has a positive impact on the town/district; many people will notice its existence, especially neighbors, and the move towards the town's/district's main vision can be grasped by some of them.
- 'High': The project has a decisively positive impact on the town/district; almost all people, also in different neighborhoods will be aware of it, and for many of them the reason for the project in respect to the town's/district's vision is revealed.
- 'Very high': The positive impact of the project is self-evident and unquestionable; all citizens of Fort Valley as well as many from the region will notice its existence and understand the potential for advancing towards a common goal for the town/district.





### **Consensus level**

- ‘Very low’: The parties disagree on almost everything, positions become hard and even threatening; the execution of the project can be delayed for even years and protests may block any possible action.
- ‘Low’: Major disagreements about the project exist among the parties and their positions begin to harden and become opposed on most of the issues. The execution of the project might be in serious jeopardy and there might be several antagonistic counterproposals that make consensus or a new option very unlikely.
- ‘Medium’: Disagreements about the direction of the project are voiced by some of the involved parties, but at least there is consensus that some action is needed in respect to the main issue. The existence of the project may be questioned, but it might be substituted by another proposal altogether that all the parties agree upon.
- ‘High’: There may be minor disagreements by some of the involved parties, but its existence will not be questioned; the execution of the project will be expected as soon as these minor questions are resolved.
- ‘Very high’: The project is backed unconditionally by all involved parties and its execution is asked to be as soon as possible.

### **Implementation potential**

- ‘Very low’: The legal, property, consensus, funding, and contracting hurdles to implement the project are almost insurmountable, highly complicated and intricately detailed, so that execution of the project becomes highly unlikely and no estimates can be given as to how long it will take to solve them.
- ‘Low’: There are various interlocking issues that complicate the start of a project (legal, property, consensus, funding, contracting, etc.), which make it difficult to estimate the beginning of its execution; certainly it is delayed more than one year.
- ‘Medium’: Hurdles to start the project (legal, property, consensus, funding, contracting, etc.) begin to amount, but they are likely to be solved in the short term; execution may start in around one year.
- ‘High’: There are small hurdles to overcome before starting the project (legal, property, consensus, funding, contracting, etc.), but nonetheless, the project can begin in the next few months.
- ‘Very high’: There are no hurdles (legal, property, consensus, funding, contracting, etc.) to execute a project; basically, it can begin the next day if wished.

### **Financial feasibility**

- ‘Very low’: Major projects that involve a great cost, which has to bear on some out-of-town agency, be handled as a long-term bond issue or be carried by an important private investor. Quantities may be \$500,000 or higher.
- ‘Low’: The cost of a project is fairly elevated and probably the city cannot pay it directly from its own funds and will have to look for a federal, state, or foundation grant to finance it; individual property owners will usually need to join interests to be able to qualify for loans this big or be sizeable corporations. Usually from \$50,000 to \$500,000.
- ‘Medium’: The cost for the project rises to an amount where the city council has to apportion the funds specifically or the private owner will probably need a loan; usually between \$5,000 and \$50,000.



- ‘High’: The cost of the project is not substantial and can be easily paid by the city/ the private owner, usually no more than \$5,000.
- ‘Very high’: There are no or only administrative or nominal costs associated with the project.

## 9. Citywide Projects

There are specific projects that should be implemented citywide rather than only in a specific district, either because (1) they are needed in all three districts, or (2) they have to be implemented at the city level because of their nature. As their scope is much wider than, say, a particular site-specific district project, their number is fairly small. They are: a citywide bike path system, the protection of inner-city orchards, a scheme for the placement of city gateways, and the revision of the comprehensive plan and the zoning regulations.



**The 4  
citywide  
projects**

### 9.1 Bike path system (Project G1)

The bicycle is an alternative form of transportation that has distinctive advantages over other modes: it has approximately four times the range and speed of a typical walk-trip; it is inexpensive; it can be used by people in more age-groups than a motorized vehicle; by itself it only produces a very low crash severity; it promotes the health of the rider, does not emit any pollutants or noise, and occupies very little space.<sup>30</sup> However, certain physical, climate, and population characteristics can greatly impact the feasibility of biking as a viable transportation alternative in an urban environment. Fort Valley is fortunate to have many of the traits usually associated with a biking town. These include:



**Advanta-  
ges of the  
bicycle**

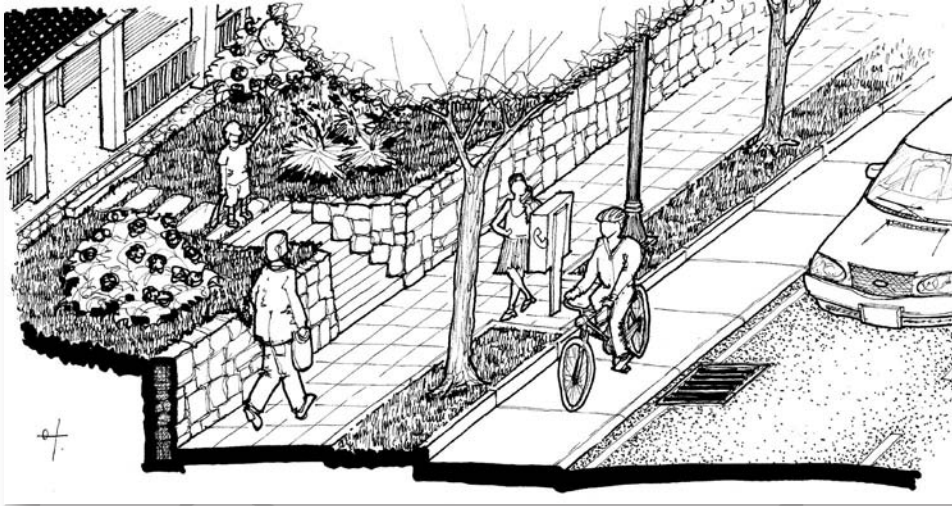
- *Size of town.* The city is approximately 3 miles across, the ideal distance for a biking trip, not only because it is the typical range of a bicyclist, but also because the bicycle has been shown to be the fastest mode of transportation, door-to-door, up to this distance in an urban environment.<sup>31</sup>
- *Topography.* Inside the city limits, Fort Valley is almost completely flat, which favors bike usage, since this mode is not practicable in hilly terrain with slopes greater than 4 to 5 %.<sup>32</sup>
- *Climate.* The climate in central Georgia is moderate in comparison to many European cities where the cold or constant rain is a slight impediment to bicycle riding. The heat in summer, however, can be considered as negative, but can be positively offset by the provision of tree-shading along all bikepaths.
- *Land-use and street pattern.* The physical disposition of many of the principal generators and attractors for bike trips (schools, downtown, orchards, etc.) are located inside the city's limits and can be reached by various streets and paths, making it easy to plan alternatives for bike-lanes that are separated from heavy traffic.
- *Population.* The composition of the inhabitants of Fort Valley is strongly impacted by the presence of the State University's 3,000 students, which



**Ideal con-  
ditions in  
Fort Valley**



correspond to 35-40% of the permanent population of the city. Students traditionally provide an excellent market for bicycles, as their income often precludes them from buying a car,<sup>33</sup> and their physical health permits them to bike without restrictions. In addition to city workers and schoolchildren, tourists visiting the town present another strong potential group for bike usage, in this case for recreational purposes.



**Figure G-26:** Example of how a bikepath with different texture can be retrofitted on existing streets. (Source: Studio.)

The provision of a bikepath system throughout Fort Valley, although highly feasible, has to be considered in phases because of its network length. About 30 miles of bikepaths are proposed, and surely some have to be built earlier than others. In the long run, the final objective is to provide a bike-lane no farther than 2-3 blocks away from every house that will, by connection to the entire network, link to all major locations in and around the city. The system, however, has to be started by constructing its most important routes first, in order to establish essential connections through the city. It then can be subsequently filled in and refined by minor paths for a targeted completeness in about 15 years. Each path in the bicycle system fulfills a specific function, and, for the specific case of Fort Valley, paths were classified into four different categories:

- *Inter-neighborhood spine.* The backbone of the bike system of Fort Valley is a North-South and two East-West axes that join all residential neighborhoods (and thus all ethnicities) with each other and with Downtown and the two smaller neighborhood retail centers in Vineville and Ganoville (treated in the North and South district sections with more detail). The spine is located along main city thoroughfares, where enough space is present and traffic is not as heavy as on State Routes, facilitating the implementation and use of bike lanes.
- *Railroad greenway diagonals.* The five radial railroad lines provide an excellent opportunity for the placement of bikepaths, especially since parallel streets exist at times and some of the tracks are no longer in use. Because of liability issues, the bikepaths will probably have to be placed outside the railroad right-of-way on city property, in some instances already present and in others in need to be acquired. Since traffic along the tracks is very low or non-existent, the character of this type of bicycle facility can take the shape of greenways,



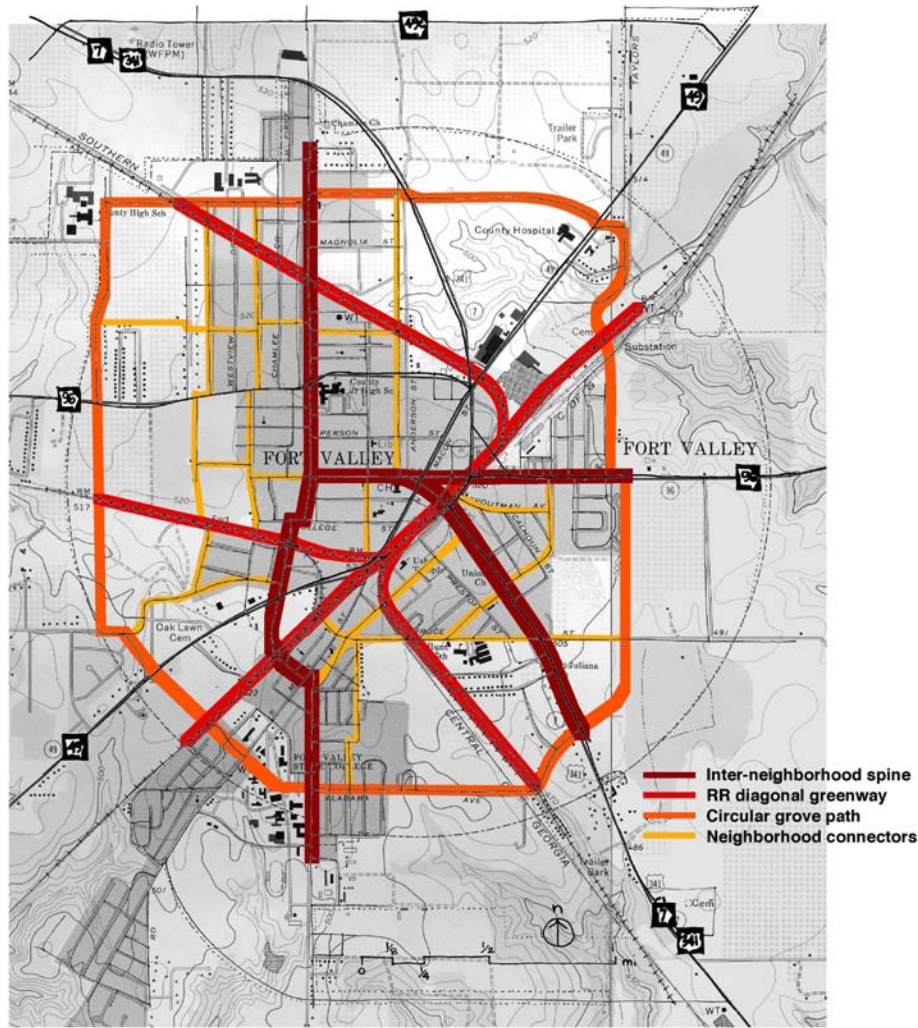
**Building in phases**



**4 types of bikepaths**





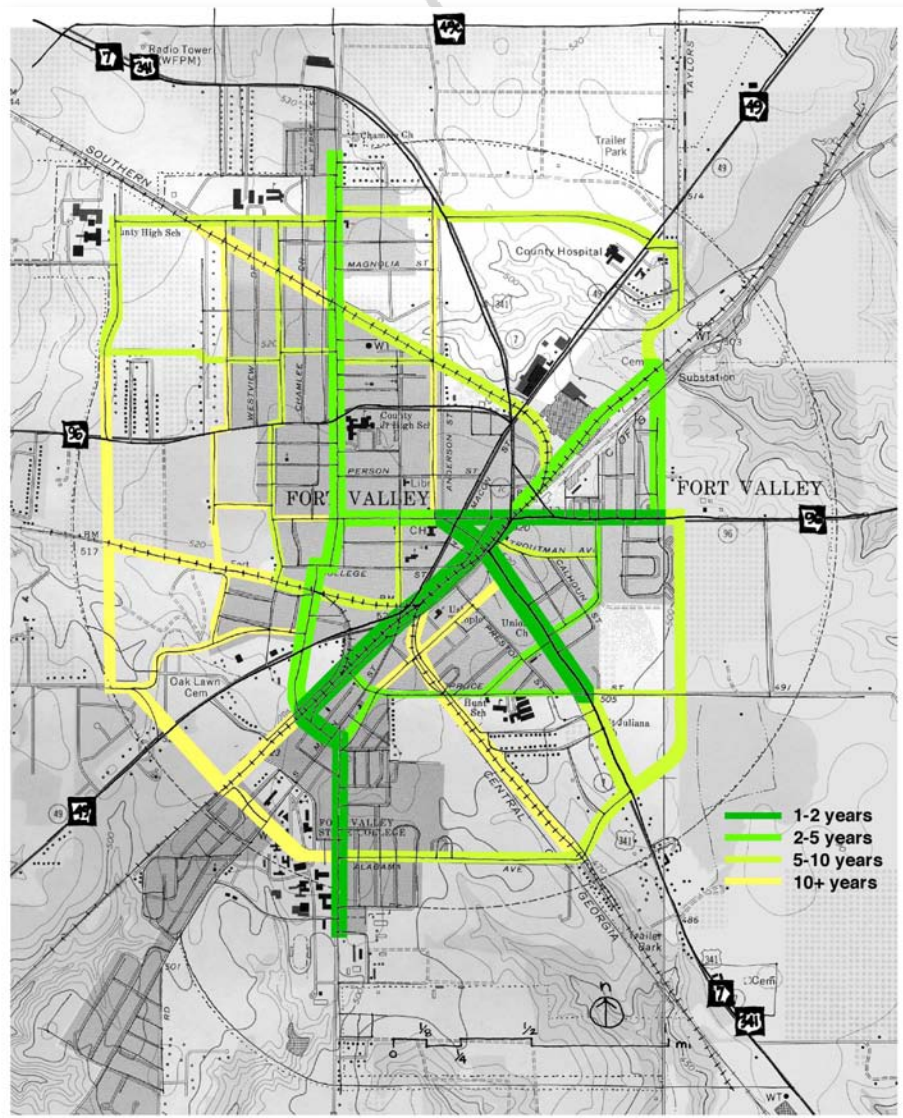


**Figure G-27:** Proposed bike path system using four distinct types of paths. (Source: Studio.)

where vegetation predominates over paved surfaces. Because their spatial pattern transverses Fort Valley in a diagonal fashion, bikepaths along railroads can be used to quickly get from one place to another, with the additional advantage that they also pass through the Downtown.

- **Circular grove path.** A circular bikepath will be created to complement the outer edges of diagonals and spines, where the city character becomes rural. It circumscribes Fort Valley with a total length of approximately 7 miles, and crosses existing groves at three different points along its route. The function of this bikepath is twofold: On the one hand it serves as an alternate route linking major facilities in town (schools, university, hospital, cemeteries, Blue Bird factory, industrial park, reconfigured landfill, etc.) and, on the other, it has a recreational and tourist function because of it travels through the rural landscape around town.
- **Neighborhood connectors.** This type of bike lane closes the gap between the three hierarchically more important types described above. Its function is not to extend for a long distance, but to bring the bike system a few blocks away to every household in Fort Valley. As such, design guidelines can be more relaxed; for example, neighborhood connectors can be just striped

onto existing pavement, while spines, diagonals, and circular paths could include special pavements, lighting, and planting patterns along their routes.



**Figure G-28:** Proposed growth pattern for the bike-path system, in regard to the importance of each link. (Source: Studio.)

The primary benefit of this citywide project will be the strong positive impact it will have on the quality of life for city residents, while the cost of the project suggests that the future implementation will likely extend during a long period of time. But creating the important sections first will ensure its functionality from the onset. A graphic showing the proposed implementation scheme is shown. A secondary benefit of the bike-path project will be the promotion of Fort Valley as a tourist destination, where the visitors not only are able to visit a peach packing plant, but also ride through the groves, picnic under the shades of the trees and ride into town in search for other activities.



**Expected  
benefits**



|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>G1</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Bike path system</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Very high  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | N/A  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | High   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | > 10 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Very low   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public funds<br>Negotiation with private owners  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Inclusion of bike lanes on existing ROW<br>Securing space for the extension of the system  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Students & other population groups ideal for bike use<br>City has optimal conditions for bike system<br>Important part of tourist attraction program |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | G2 for outer bike ring   |

**Table G-7:** Summary matrix for the bike-path system project. (Source: Studio.)

## 9.2 Protection of orchards (Project G2)

One of the principal strengths that Fort Valley has as a small city is that the peach orchards and the pecan groves, the mainstay agricultural produce of the surrounding area, extend directly into the central parts of the town. On the Five Points intersection, pecan groves are just a few hundred feet away; on all approaches into town one can see at least one peach or pecan orchard. It is important for the city and its inhabitants to



**Groves  
still get  
into town**



**Figure G-29:** Pecan groves located northwest of the Five Points intersection on GA-7, the “Peach Blossom Trail”. (Source: Studio.)





protect this asset for future generations, not only for its aesthetic value, but to preserve part of the city's and the county's heritage, to assure nearby open space for recreation of the people of Fort Valley, and to promote the city as a tourist destination. Moreover, the protection of orchards goes hand-in-hand with the provision of bikepaths, in particular the circular grove path. Two different approaches to protection should be taken:

- *Grove area protection.* This refers to the area proper of the groves now existing in and around Fort Valley. The intention is not to convert the groves into a tourist attraction, but to retain them as a viable economic activity where parallel uses can coexist, such as bikepaths and picnic-grounds. Thus, the city and the county should zone the proposed areas as agricultural, where no other use should be allowed. Particular attention should be given to groves along radial highways, as it is there where most people come in contact with the plantations of peaches and pecans. The proposed areas could be extended in the future to the highways where deemed practical.
- *Green linear reserves.* To guarantee open greenspace in the future for the circular grove path outside the actual groves, a 200-foot wide strip should be reserved by the city for planting with peach- or pecan-trees, in order to evoke the environment inside the groves. These greenways are proposed only for stretches along the circular bikepath that currently are rural or open spaces. It is not proposed for existing street alignments it surely does not make sense to set aside this wide area,



2 types of protection

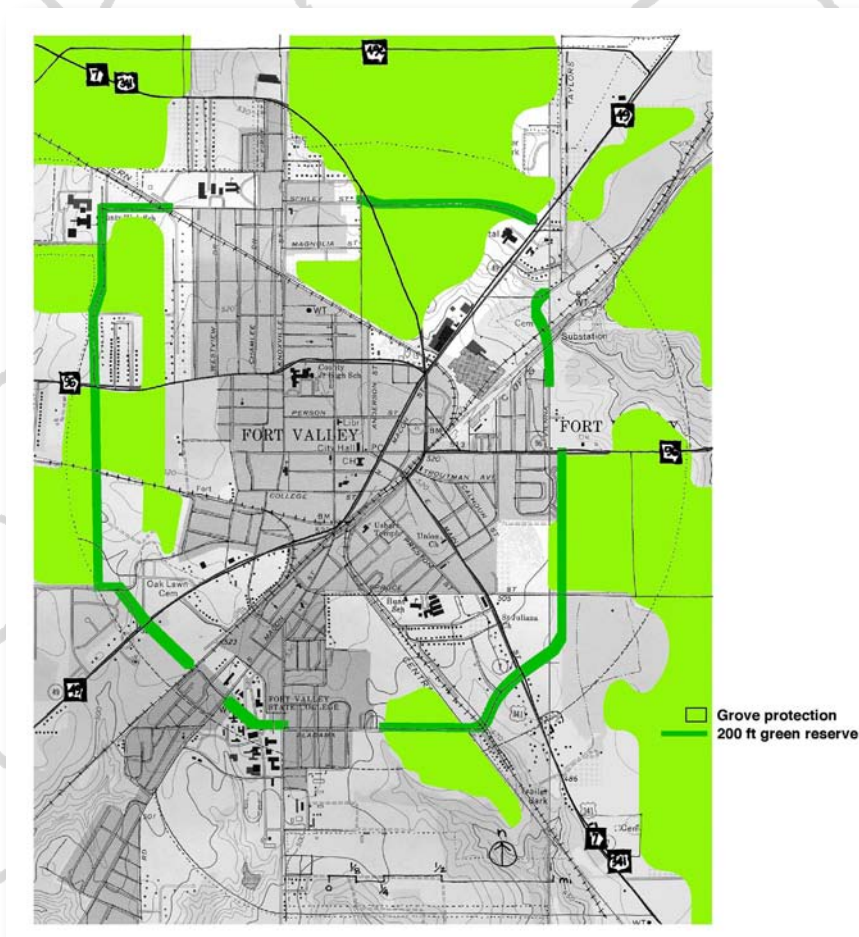


Figure G-30: Proposal for agricultural areas to preserve. (Source: Studio.)

where buildings are already present and the character is already more urban than rural.

The city should discuss with peach and pecan growers and other agricultural land owners the alternatives to protect their property from development. Negotiable transfer of development rights could be an alternative, but this would only be useful if it could be applied to the rest of the county; another possibility is buying development rights from property owners or the permission to develop a portion of the grove without damaging the trees and boundary divisions. In any case, the advantages of tourism and recreation as additional income sources for landowners should be taken into account – resulting in an agreement beneficial for both parties.



**Work with  
local grove  
owners**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>G2</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Protection of existing orchards</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Administrative  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Very high   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | N/A   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | High  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public funds  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Zoning of existing orchards for agricultural only<br>Buying/transfer of development rights from owners  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Groves still get into the center of town<br>Groves are part of history of Fort Valley<br>Groves can function as tourist attraction & locus for biking |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

**Table G-8:** Summary matrix for the grove protection project. (Source: Studio.)

### 9.3 Welcome gateways (Project G3)

Fort Valley is still a transportation node at the regional level; three State Routes and a US Route meet in the city, creating a pattern of six radial highways meeting at one point and fanning out in every direction. The visitor and the passer-by have to be informed in a visually unambiguous way that they are entering Fort Valley and not any other town in Georgia. Thus, a distinct statement is needed at all entrances into town that in turn, can also serve as a marker when leaving town. However, since some of the arteries bring the countryside right into town and 5 radial routes converge on one spot both near Downtown and the urban fringe (called *Five Points*), it is advisable to create a principal gateway to town in that location. Finally, the main open space of the city along the railroad lines in Downtown will also need a definition of



**Distinct  
statement  
on entering  
Fort Valley**

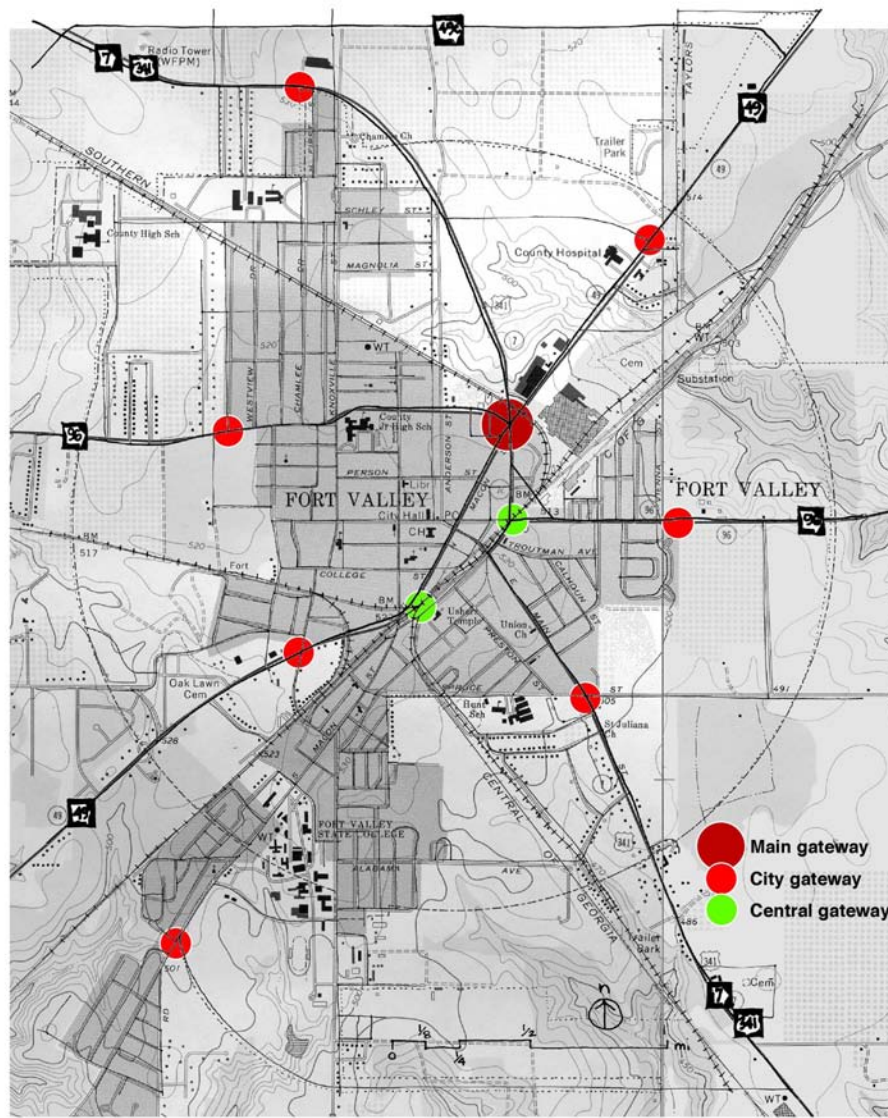


entry and exit. Specifically, the proposed interventions for each of these situations are the following:

- *Seven city gateways.* On each of the six radial routes plus the State University Drive (because of its importance as a city connector) a location was selected that best represents the change in character from a rural highway into an urban artery. The proposal for each of these gateways is to include a marker in a central median, flanked by peach- and pecan-trees, flowers and pedestrian-scale lighting. There are two reasons to include a median: first, it psychologically sits in the field of vision of the driver and changes the road layout he/she has been driving for miles, signaling a definite break; and second, the shift in driving trajectory will cause a reduction in speed to a level appropriate for urban areas. A pedestrian crossing can be part of the design, as it fits into the intent to signal an urban environment.
- *One main gateway.* The central gateway at the Five Points intersection has several



**3 types of gateways**

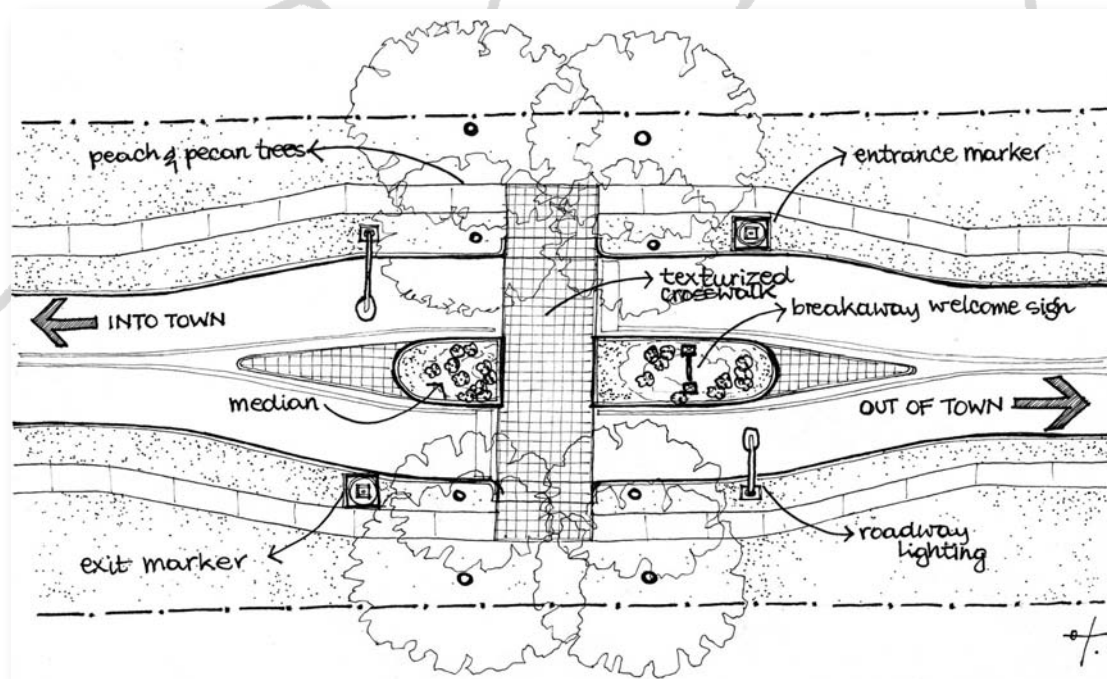


**Figure G-31:** Proposal for the placement of the three types of gateways that are recommended. (Source: Studio.)



purposes: (1) to signal the real entrance into town, celebrating the past and future of Fort Valley; (2) to improve the aesthetic conditions of the intersection; (3) to attract drivers into the Downtown and other areas of interest; and (4) to improve the traffic conditions and delays at the current intersection. The specific proposals for this gateway is explored in depth in the section on the northern district. It uses the same physical components as the city gateways.

- *Two central gateways.* The longitudinal space along the railroad tracks in the center of the city is the main public space of the community. The intent of these gateways is to celebrate the origin and past of the city, while at the same time looking with confidence into the future. At the northern (Church Street) and the southern end (State University Drive) a statement should be made to indicate the limits of this public locus and, as well as to make evident the boundaries to the districts to the north and south. The gateways will use many of the components of the city gateways, doing so with a more urban character.



**Figure G-32:** Example of a city gateway at the entrance into town, which serves various purposes: information to the drivers, promotion of Fort Valley, reduction of speeds, and a crossing opportunity for pedestrians (Source: Studio.)

Any proposal of a gateway in the right-of-way is sure to be closely scrutinized by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), as traffic safety is one of its main concerns. Thus, it is advisable to work closely with GDOT, trying to find solutions that both satisfy its and the city's concerns. Breakaway signs, placement of trees only on the outside of the central area, provision of rumble strips, and the prospect of an improvement in traffic circulation can be used as common themes for initial conversations.



**Negotia-  
tions with  
GDOT  
needed**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>G3</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Welcome gateways</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | N/A   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Very high   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | High  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public funds  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Siting of 7 gateways on medians at entrances into city  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Marker to define limits of town or urban/rural border<br>Reduction of speed for entering vehicles<br>Get attention of drivers to check out what FV has to offer |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

*Table G-9: Summary matrix for the welcome gateways project. (Source: Studio.)*

## 9.4 Revision of comprehensive plan and zoning (Project G4)

The regulations for land-use and construction are one of the major forces shaping the physical environment of an urban community. Thus, it is important to check if these correspond to the general vision for the future of the particular community. In the case of Fort Valley, the comprehensive plan of 1991 was produced jointly for Peach County and for the city, and thus, it might be assumed that a certain consistency in the land-use patterns would exist between the two jurisdictions. However, this is not the case. The two land-use maps presented in the document, when joined together, produce a disjointed proposal at the city boundaries which needs to be addressed. These maps constitute the only graphic element in the comprehensive plan where the policies, objectives and strategies set forth in the written part are actually converted into a defined spatial setting. As such, are a vague and imprecise tool to direct future growth. The text itself has sections where the presented ideas are too general; more precision and specificity in the proposal are essential to convey how the objectives, policies and strategies are to be used as tools for action.

In a number of instances, the comprehensive plan contradicts itself by stating a major objective and then a minor one that are diametrically opposed. For example, one objective is to have a proper mixture of housing types, while a few lines later one reads that mobile homes have to be located in 'appropriate' residential zones. This arises the question of whether housing mix really is wanted. In addition, the comprehensive plan treats minimally, if at all, important facilities with citywide impact, such as Fort Valley State University, the Blue Bird factory and the Woolfolk site.



**Disjointed  
land-use  
policies**



**Internal  
contradictions and  
flaws**

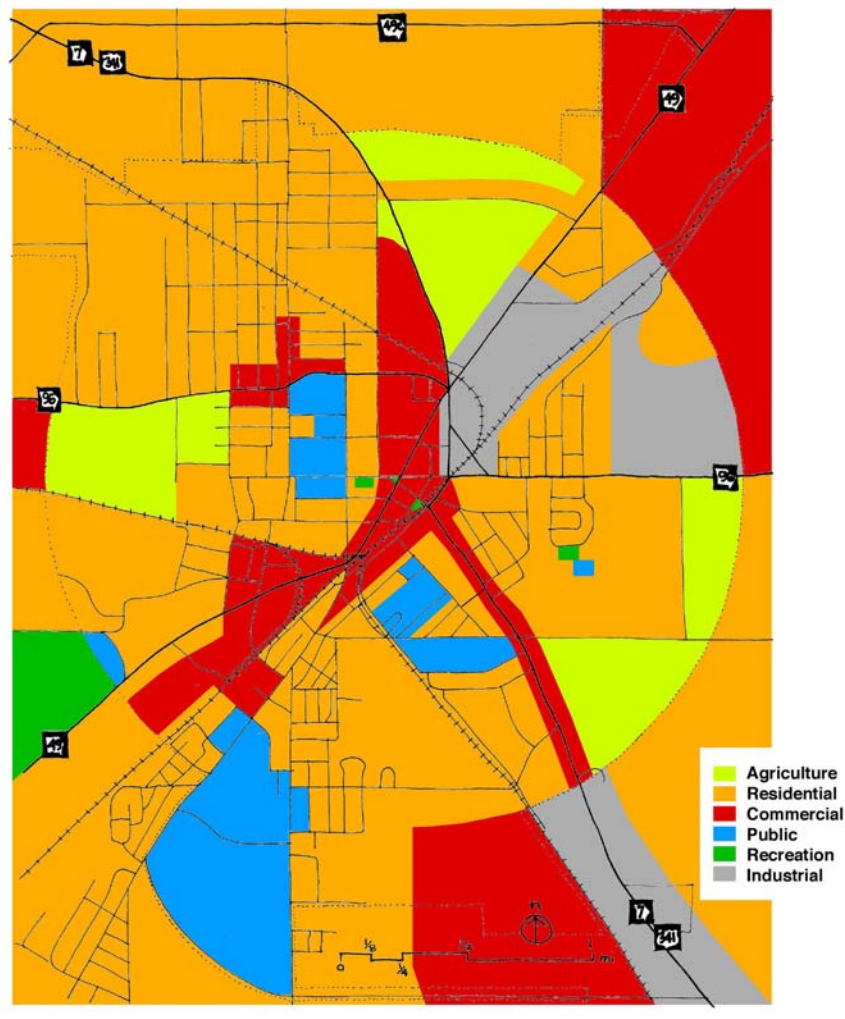


For this revision we propose the following guidelines:

- Consideration of the land-uses of Fort Valley and the surrounding unincorporated county in a holistic and interdependent way.
- Taking into account all uses that have or can have a significant impact onto the community.
- Consideration of transportation not only as a separate, efficiency based service, but consistently linked to land-use patterns – more traffic is not always to be equated with economic development.
- Definition of a single, consistent housing policy, that truly promotes “safe, adequate, and affordable housing”.<sup>34</sup>
- Promotion of commercial patterns that discourage strip development that require large parking areas between the sidewalk and the building front.
- Acceptance of the idea that if Fort Valley is to be transformed, it will need changes that benefit the city as a whole but will not necessarily be accepted by everyone in the community. Therefore, maintenance of the status quo cannot be an alternative if Fort Valley is going to revitalize and reinvent itself.



## Suggestions for the Comp-Plan



**Figure G-33:** The land-use policies of the comprehensive plan for the city and the surrounding county contradict themselves, even when coming from the same document: the circular city boundary is readily visible (Source: Studio, based on the “Joint Comprehensive Plan for Peach County and the City of Fort Valley”, 1991.)



The zoning ordinance of the city, which governs the way buildings are constructed, is relatively simple and straightforward in comparison to other localities. However, as with many zoning ordinances around the country, Fort Valley's ordinance lacks specificity in issues that are of high importance to the quality of the street environment. A good streetscape is essential for the promotion of a lively walking environment, that is desirable for increasing activity in the Downtown. Additionally, it promotes equity for all road-users and contributes to the ecological sustainability of the town. Specific suggestions for the city's revision of its zoning ordinance include:

- Flexibility in the provision of parking, especially for commercial uses.
- Revision of the setback distances, particularly at the front of the lot, and maximum lot occupation to allow higher densities for commercial uses. A policy allowing a build-to-line of buildings might be established.
- Elaboration of a fine-grain zoning map that reflect the specific needs of each blockface, taking into account existing buildings and uses.
- Inclusion of specific streetscape design guidelines, especially for non-residential areas, such as minimum transparency of façade, level of the ground floor, location of entrances and parking, accessory commercial sidewalk uses, accent lines at the second floor, etc.
- Provision of density bonuses or other incentives for compatible mixed uses in the same lot, such as retail on the ground floor and residential upstairs.

The revision of the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance will be a task of the public sector, where substantial agreements between the city and county governments have to take place. Nonetheless, it is strongly suggested that participation of the public has to happen through all phases of the project, always having in mind the main reason for each proposed change – the attainment of the city's vision.



## Flaws of zoning ordinance



## Suggestions for zoning ordinance

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>G4</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Revision of Comprehensive Plan &amp; Zoning</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Administrative  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | N/A   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Very high   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public funds  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Revision of plans & ordinances to be in line with vision for FV                             |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Current documents too vague & conflicting<br>Current documents basically propose status quo |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

**Table G-10:** Summary matrix for the plan-and-ordinance revision project. (Source: Studio.)



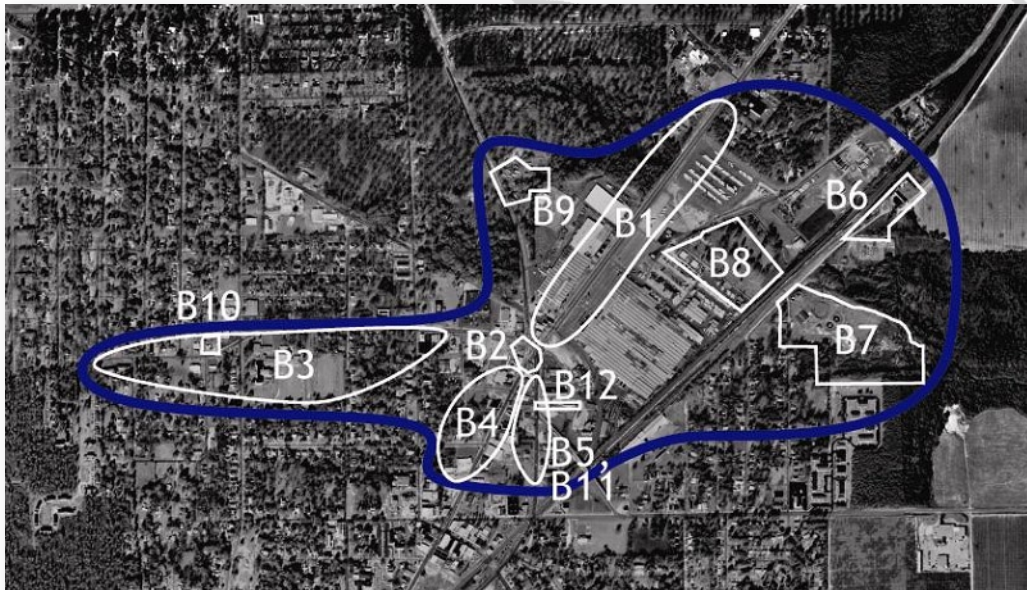
All four citywide projects, as it is shown, are directly or indirectly linked to specific actions to happen in the three distinct districts; they are not proposals for the rest of Fort Valley, but complement on a larger scale smaller interventions inside the districts. As such, they interconnect what would seem as isolated actions into a whole. The three parts of the report that follow deal with much more detail with these smaller, district-specific projects.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> As provided by the Brownfield Advisory Group and Becky Lance Svatos, Stanley Consultants.
- <sup>2</sup> John Donne (1572-1631).
- <sup>3</sup> City of Fort Valley Vision Statement, 1998.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Daughters of the American Revolution (1972). *History of Peach County, Georgia*. Atlanta, GA: Cherokee Publishing Company.
- <sup>6</sup> Caldwell, Wilber W. (2001). *The Courthouse and the Depot*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.
- <sup>7</sup> Account of T.F. Flournoy in *History of Peach County, Georgia*, op. cit.
- <sup>8</sup> Account of W.H. Harris in *History of Peach County, Georgia*, op. cit.
- <sup>9</sup> *History of Peach County, Georgia*, op. cit. The depot mentioned is actually the old freight depot south of Main Street, which handled both goods and passengers, and which does not exist any more.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Courthouse and the Depot*, op. cit.
- <sup>11</sup> Windham, Marilyn N. (1997). *Peach County: The World's Peach Paradise*. Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing.
- <sup>12</sup> EPA, July 16-18, 2002
- <sup>13</sup> Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Information and Analysis Division, 2001.
- <sup>14</sup> US Census (2000).
- <sup>15</sup> US Census (2000). General Housing Characteristics.
- <sup>16</sup> HUD (2002). Economic Benefits of Increasing Minority Homeownership: <<http://www.hud.gov/initiatives/blueprint/econreport-101502.pdf>>
- <sup>17</sup> 2001 Traffic information from Georgia DOT Website: <<http://www.dot.state.ga.us/>>
- <sup>18</sup> October 2002. Survey by Fort Valley State University Students. Interviews by Studio Members
- <sup>19</sup> Fort Valley State Campus Master Plan 2001.
- <sup>20</sup> Rosan, Richard M. *The Key Role of Universities in Our Nation's Economic Growth and Urban Revitalization*. Speech given April 10, 2002, at St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO
- <sup>21</sup> See appendix: College Student Spending Patterns/Local University Effect on Economic Development.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> See appendix: Developing Biotech Space
- <sup>25</sup> From: <<http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu>>
- <sup>26</sup> HUD (2000). *A guide to deconstruction: an overview of deconstruction with a focus on community development opportunities*. Washington DC.
- <sup>27</sup> Leigh, Nancey Green (Forthcoming). *The State Role in Urban Land Redevelopment*. Brookings Institution.
- <sup>28</sup> Peach County Chamber of Commerce Mission Statement, 2002.
- <sup>29</sup> From: <<http://bisnet.cmps.subr.edu/Valley/Welcome/VALwel01.htm>>
- <sup>30</sup> Sanz, Alfonso et al. (1996). *The Bicycle in the City*. Ministerio de Fomento, Madrid, Spain.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> See appendix: College Student Spending Patterns/Local University Effect on Economic Development.
- <sup>34</sup> Middle Georgia Regional Development Center (1991). *Joint Comprehensive Plan for Peach County and the City of Fort Valley*. Fort Valley, MGRDC.



## II. North District



**Figure B-1:** North District's boundary, shown in blue, with the location of the proposed individual projects. (Source: Studio.)

### 1. District Vision

The northern district of Fort Valley is comprised of distinct sections that have vital community functions, such as the Blue Bird manufacturing facility and the Vineville residential neighborhood. The vision for this district evolves from the ideas of connectivity between areas and the transitions between the different uses, emphasizing and creating character, and bringing functions together. Improving the connectivity of people to commercial and retail uses, and these uses to other potential uses, is the primary aimed at overcoming the automobile-dependent character of this district. The pedestrian can, again, be reunited with the street and the streets tempered to accommodate this new form of traffic. In this manner, Fort Valley can be returned to its original human-oriented form. The vision for the district has four basic themes that are pertinent to the major projects in this district, as listed herein.

#### Promenade approach into city

The visitor to Fort Valley may not know where the city ends or begins. The entrance into the city should identify it as a unique community. Memorable places offer the feeling of arrival, and invite travelers to explore what is, or is soon to be, before them. The promenade does not necessarily end at the north district edge, as it is primarily comprised of a series of bike paths and pedestrian connections, which link each district of the city together.

#### Blue Bird improvements

The main consideration for the Blue Bird site should be to improve its visual impact on the street, as an industrial facility. Tree landscaping is one way to



**Connectivity**  
main issue



**Entrance**  
into town  
important





accomplish this, but the history of the company is far too important to hide it behind a canopy of trees and plantings. On the contrary, the Blue Bird facility should be accentuated as a gateway or heritage site that proclaims its history as well as the future for the company. Hence, the fence should be removed or relocated east toward the main building, and busses should be brought forward and strategically placed along side the commercial node to display what is being produced, as well as what has been produced in Fort Valley for a nearly a century. Buses can be displayed in the same way that car dealerships showcase their new models along the street. The product in this case is the city, as well as the busses. This new and improved image will help to sell the visitor on Fort Valley.



**Blue Bird  
an asset  
on access  
highway**

### **Social/recreational uses**

Commercial Heights and other underutilized parts of the city have the potential for redevelopment but not necessarily the market demand that drives development. Nevertheless, these areas also have the potential for new uses that incorporate social and recreational functions such as seasonal, festival activities (such as the Peach Festival), which may, then, encourage more use of the sites for other purposes, if not for capital investment. The area south of the Five Points intersection contains a few Brownfield sites that have the potential for these new uses. Remediation of these sites is a primary concern, but these sites should also be considered based on their historic significance and, therefore, improved to facilitate gathering for periodic festivities as well as continuous commerce. Furthermore, commercial uses that blend with the new idea of social gathering and festivity should be encouraged in this area. There are buildings nearby that can accommodate nightclub uses and other community activities. There need not be a uniform standard for building designs in this area, as its strength will come from the eclectic uses associated with entertainment and social gathering.



**What to  
do with  
under-  
utilized  
areas**

### **Commercial node (Vineville neighborhood/North Camellia, and Commercial Heights)**

These nodes are key to revitalization, and for enhancing the variety and quality of services available to visitors and residents of the area. Improvements in landscaping and streetscapes are the primary consideration. The buildings in this area need to address the street, but need not be directly on the street or have the same setbacks, as landscaping improvements will be the unifying element along these major commercial nodes.



**Less auto-  
orientation  
on nodes**

## **2. General Description of District**

The north district is spatially dominated by the Blue Bird manufacturing facility from the center of the district to the northeast area of the city limits, as well as by the Bird's Nest in the north-central section of the district. The west side of the district is largely residential in character and a sharp contrast to the sections surrounding and to the east of the Five Points intersection. The entrance into the city from North Camellia is commercial and industrial in character. The Blue Bird facility greets the traveler with the busses on the lot and the heavy chain-link fence that



**Dominance  
by Blue  
Bird**



surrounds the facility. After passing this facility, one next encounters the Five Points intersection, which is surrounded by a gas station, Blue Bird, a CVS pharmacy, and an assortment of small commercial buildings that include a many franchise restaurants. This is the heart of the district as well as the front door for anyone entering from the north.

Historically, a less consumerist form of development characterized the north district. An analysis of historic insurance maps shows that in 1895, the north area of Fort Valley was largely undeveloped. Modest dwellings and a wagon shop existed on North Camellia (formerly called Macon), but no other development existed in the district. Between 1900 and 1911, the area of North Camellia acquired a few small shops, a number of homes, and an opera house. By 1920, the opera house appears to have been dissolved and the area retained a mainly residential character with the exception of a Ford sales and service center (ostensibly the site of A.L. Luce's first bus manufacturing facilities). Commercial Heights (formerly Fairgrounds) showed the Bassett rooming house, a small number of warehouses, small-detached houses, a mill chapel, and a structure called "Gabriel's Cabin." The stretch of road seems to have been a working-class neighborhood. In 1920, the Five Points intersection had not been created, and North Camellia had a prominent jag where it, Vineville, and Commercial Heights met. Standard Oil and the Southern Cannery were situated at the intersection of these streets. By 1950, Camellia was largely occupied by automobile sales and repair businesses. Blue Bird had moved into its present location, Five Points became a more coherent interchange, and the Coca-Cola bottling plant was built. Commercial Heights retained a number of small dwellings and shops and several peach and pecan facilities were built.



**What was there before?**

Neighborhoods in the north district are characterized by diverse populations and land uses. The quarter mile ring surrounding the Blue Bird facility contains only 69 persons while the half-mile ring has 1,034. This population is predominantly white. It has a density of 0.43 persons per square mile within the quarter mile ring and 4.14 within the half-mile ring.<sup>1</sup> West of Blue Bird, the Vineville neighborhood node serves a large Latino population. The street network in the north district ranges from low-density residential and transitional strip to heavy industrial along Georgia 49 and Commercial Heights. Today GA-49 has the highest traffic volume in the city, at up to 16,000 vehicles per day. The north end of Fort Valley serves as a gateway for visitors from the important Macon and I-75 areas. Historically, the 1851 Macon to Florida rail dominated the area.



**Neighborhoods**

## 3. District Projects

### 3.1 Blue Bird facilities (Projects B1 and B9)

Fort Valley's prominent Blue Bird bus and motorhome plant occupies a large plot of land flanking the north entrance to town. With such a dominating visual presence, the factory, already an important employer and tourist destination,



stands to become a model for community improvements throughout the city. The streetscape along Georgia 49 has potential to become a monumental approach to Fort Valley and the grounds enhanced for additional Wanderlodge guest facilities. Finally, the Henlys Group and Blue Bird could inexpensively fulfill the need for mass transit in the small college community.

In 1927, A.L. Luce founded the Blue Bird body company out of his Ford service center and dealership. The business flourished, and in the 1940s, Luce constructed a new facility at the current Five Points site. The corporate headquarters have recently returned to Fort Valley, despite the sale of the company to Merrill Lynch, and subsequently to U.K. bus producer, Henlys in 1999. The firm employs nearly two-thirds of its 3,000 total workers at its Fort Valley plants. The city is in negotiation to secure an additional 630 jobs in a proposed plant expansion.

Currently, the facility manufactures only Wanderlodge recreational vehicles and commercial buses. School bus assembly moved to LaFayette, Georgia in 2002, to accommodate increased commercial bus production. Due to the prominent location and economic importance of the facility, the Blue Bird plant and neighboring Bird's Nest recreational vehicle park are extremely significant to the redevelopment of central Fort Valley.

Recommendations for the Blue Bird property include improved streetscapes, enhancement of the Bird's Nest Park, and public monuments. Currently, the Blue Bird boundary consists of chain-link fence and poorly defined landscaping along Georgia



## History of Blue Bird



## Current production



## Recommendations

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B1</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Bluebird promenade</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | < 1 year   |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Low  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Blue Bird<br>City  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Private  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | New fence with distinctive elements, and sidewalk<br>Buses used for display<br>Trees and other plantings |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Display company's support for city<br>Pedestrian access<br>Visual distinction for front entry into city  |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | B2   |

*Table B-1: Summary matrix for the Blue Bird promenade project. (Source: Studio.)*







**Figure B-2:** Current conditions on the northern approach to Fort Valley, framed by the Blue-Bird plant. (Source: Studio.)



**Figure B-3:** The same location after the proposed changes (Source: Studio.)

49. Improved streetscapes, such as hedges or ornamental fencing, would augment the image of both Fort Valley and the Blue Bird Company. Public monuments, such as a replica of Blue Bird bus #1 (currently on display at the plant museum), would increase visibility of the historical manufacturing operations and instill civic pride in the city. Similarly, enhancement of the Bird's Nest Park would create a secondary, company-oriented city entry along Atlanta Road. While most of the preceding improvements would be primarily funded by Blue Bird or the city, TEA 2000 80/20 matched grants are available to assist in streetscape development.

An informal survey of Wanderlodge owners visiting the Bird's Nest was extremely complimentary of existing park conditions.<sup>2</sup> The courtesy and hospitality of Blue Bird employees was cited often, as was the location of the



**Better  
street-  
scapes**



park near local businesses and the Blue Bird factory. Possible improvements mentioned included better maintenance and cleaning of facilities, displays for Wanderlodge and Bluebird merchandise in the clubhouse, expansion of vehicle hook-ups due to increased demand at peak times, and better connection with the plant. Responses also showed that many Wanderlodge owners staying at the Bird's Nest patronize local businesses. The park is a frequent stop for many owners from the north driving to Florida, evoking the historical image of Fort Valley as the gateway for rail passengers on their way to Florida. Wanderlodge owners strongly felt that the Bird's Nest should continue to be supported and its brand-enhancing value recognized by Blue Bird.

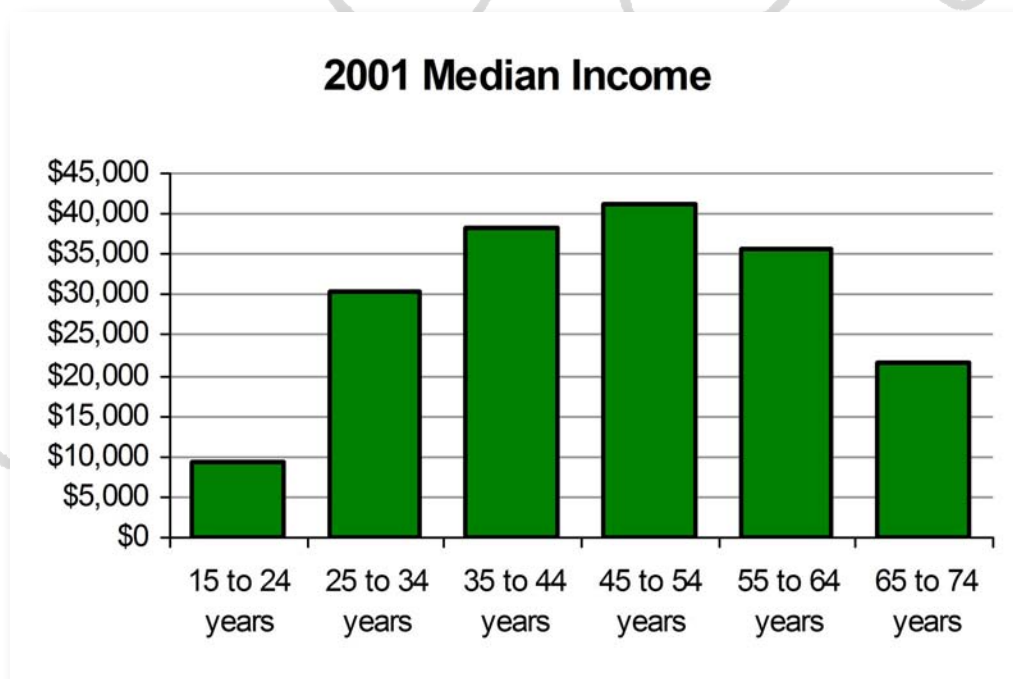


## Wander- lodges and the Bird's Nest

Considering the popularity of the "Rally in the Valley," a motor home gathering in nearby Perry, Georgia, the Bird's Nest Park is a valuable resource for both Blue Bird and Fort Valley. The Blue Bird-sponsored rally attracted 1,000 Wanderlodge owners from October 25-28, 2002. A similar Perry rally held by the Family Motor Coach Association in March hosted 5,854 coaches, making it the sixth-largest motorhome gathering. Blue Bird could capitalize on the visitors attending the events by improving and advertising their facility. While the Bird's Nest is spatially isolated from downtown at present, signage or expansion would open the site for improved connections with the business district. Additionally, an event held in Fort Valley may draw equivalent numbers of visitors to the area as the Rally in the Valley. A space adjacent to the town center and near the plant, such as the proposed festival grounds on Commercial Heights, would be an excellent choice of location to maximize the benefit to all stakeholders. The Rally in the Valley hosts a merchandise mart and craft show, which, in addition to supplemental tourist expenditures, would increase local merchant revenues. While further research is warranted to confirm, the spending power of Wanderlodge owners is expected to be strong, as the coach is one of the finest and most costly recreational vehicles available. In general, the motorhome market is on the rise, with aging baby boomers, 35-54 years



## Activities related to the motor home



**Figure B-4:** Median income available broken down by age. (Source: US Census Bureau, 2001 income data.)



old, purchasing vehicles at higher rates than any other age group.<sup>3</sup> As seen in the chart, the median incomes of this group are the highest of any age group. The typical recreational vehicle owner is married, 49 years old, with an income of \$56,000.

 **Potential of RV owners**

“...Wanderlodge owners have the power to move luxury from place to place. This gives them the opportunity to indulge in excellence and enjoy fine living within their motorhome...”<sup>4</sup>

- Frank & Susan Tolson

Students at Fort Valley State University consider public transportation one of their primary concerns.<sup>5</sup> A donated or leased Blue Bird bus could facilitate the needs of student, residents, and Blue Bird employees by running from neighborhood nodes at Vineville, FVSU, Griffin Line, Ganoville, and the downtown business district. The bus service could be expanded during Peach Festival, Rally in the Valley, and Camellia Festival to facilitate visitor movement. In addition to aiding the community, the bus service would provide name recognition for the brand. The sort of local involvement proposed is explicitly supported in the 2001 Henlys Report.

 **Public transit and Blue Bird**

“The Group recognizes the importance of local community involvement particularly in the areas where its subsidiary companies have manufacturing facilities and encourages active support through local management.”<sup>6</sup>

While the company provides the largest number of jobs and is the county’s strongest firm, Blue Bird is also the largest single source of toxic chemical emissions in the county. Several chemicals known or suspected to be public health risks are released in the form of air emissions and there is significant evidence to support groundwater contamination under the plant. Known air pollution sources from the plant include Toluene, Methanol, Xylene, Ethyl Benzene, Glycol Ethers, and Butyl Alcohol, which present real and/or

 **Pollution and Blue Bird**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B9</b>                                    |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Bird's nest improvements</b>              |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement                             |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium                                       |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Low  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium                                       |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year                                       |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Low  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Blue Bird                                    |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Private                                      |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Landscaping and iconic sidewalks, wayfinding |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Possible tourist attraction                  |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | B1   |

*Table B-2: Summary matrix for the Bird's nest improvements project. (Source: Studio.)*





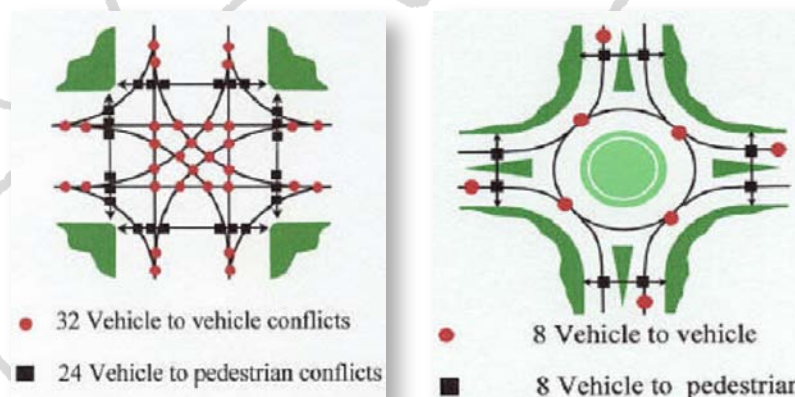
suspected health threats. Fugitive air releases from 1987-1999 totaled almost 1 million pounds, and stack air releases totaled 1.6 million pounds. In addition, 1.2 millions pounds of waste were transported off-site for disposal during this time period. The Georgia Department of Natural resources forced the closing of a landfill on the site in 1983, which had been used for over a decade. A final recommendation for the Blue Bird grounds is increased pressure on the Environmental Protection Agency to follow up on existing studies of groundwater and soil pollution on the grounds.

### 3.2 Five Points roundabout (Project B2)

The Five Points intersection is the most strategic of the projects presented here, because it is a gateway to the city and, therefore, altering its appearance will also change the character of this entire area of Fort Valley. The intersection is a five-point link of the main highways that bisect the city (341, 96, and 49). This junction of road is not only the most prominent in the city, but also the most problematic, since traffic builds up at this point.

This project requires a high level of intervention. We recommend reconfiguring the intersection into a roundabout, altering its appearance and function permanently. This recommendation may be considered strictly on the premise of aesthetic importance, but the functional ramifications are far more saleable and important to the community. Traffic congestion may be the most visible problem with this intersection, but the potential for accidents is the main corollary, and, this alone offers enough justification to rebuild the intersection.

However, the aesthetic concerns for this site should not be overlooked and the roundabout is the perfect solution for a five-point intersection. Roundabouts are more commonly found in the US (examples are located in many states) and include a circular street designed around a round, central island, which is usually landscaped or may contain a fountain or statue. Vehicles approaching them from any direction yield to traffic before entering on the right and then exiting, also, to the right onto the desired thoroughfare.



**Figure B-5:** Comparison of the number of conflict points at a traditional intersection with those happening at a roundabout. This is the main reason why roundabouts are safer than normal intersections, particularly for pedestrians; and why they can operate without signals. (Source: Roundabouts website: <[www.roundabouts.net](http://www.roundabouts.net)>.)



**Five Points  
strategic  
place for  
Fort Valley**



**Round-  
abouts in  
the US**



A roundabout should not be confused with a traffic circle. When designing a roundabout the most important criterion is design speed. On high-speed rural roundabouts, 25 mph is the maximum design speed that should be used. A roundabout consists of a central island of greenery that can vary in form from ovals and ellipses at odd shaped intersections to the ordinary circle. “Each leg of a roundabout has a splitter island, a triangular shaped island, that provides a refuge for pedestrians, prevents drivers from making the wrong-way left turn, guides drivers through the roundabout by directing them to the edge of the central island and helps to slow drivers.”<sup>7</sup>

Improvements to the five-point intersection are necessary at some point in time, but the cost is the primary hurdle to overcome in making these changes. A roundabout could cost as much or in excess of \$500,000. The will costs vary based on the extent of



**What is a roundabout?**



**Costs and funding**



**Figure B-6:** Existing conditions on the northwestern approach to the intersection. (Source: Studio.)



**Figure B-7:** Proposed changes in the streetscape of the same location. The new central island is located where the palm trees are. (Source: Studio.)



landscaping and other visual improvements. The objective is to emphasize prominent features or symbols of the city, via public art on the center island of the roundabout, to provide the incentive for private entities to get involved in the funding process. For example, Blue Bird might fund part of the improvements to have the symbol of the company or perhaps a statue of A.L. Luce on the island. This project would require raising private funds with local or state public funds to get matching funds from the federal pool of transportation money. GDOT obtains funds from the federal government for non-urbanized areas through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), using the Transportation Improvement Funds (TIP) that could be used in this project. Blue Bird is one logical source of private funding, but this intersection has other national companies with a mission of community involvement, including the McDonald's Corporation.

This is an ambitious project, requiring firm stakeholder support and encouragement. If implemented, it will eliminate the unfavorable impression the North entrance to Fort Valley conveys through its visual blight and inefficient traffic management.

The current configuration of the Five Points intersection is deficient, not only in respect to traffic control, but also in making an urban design statement for Fort Valley. The main negative issues are:

- Traffic control through signals is very inefficient, not only because there are five different approaches, but because there are separate phases for left-turns. These make more approach lanes necessary, since through and left-turn movements happen at different times.
- The geometry of the intersection, where centerlines of the approaches do not meet at a single point makes combined movements difficult and accounts for awkward movements across the central area.
- The location of hanging signals and guidance signs result in visual clutter, as 6 poles have to support the 9 suspended cables that criss-cross the intersection.
- There are no provisions for pedestrians to cross the road at the intersection at any point; moreover, none of the approaches provides a continuous sidewalk into or out of town.
- The three islands at the intersection are not designed as an urban feature, but are truly leftover spaces that are not needed by traffic movements. As such, they are not in the focal point of drivers, but conveniently serve as locations to place signs and poles.
- The only island that is consciously landscaped, between Camellia and Vineville, includes a fountain as the only civic landmark to claim the intersection as a part of Fort Valley. However, the position of the fountain, away from driver's vision and inaccessible by foot, makes it an inconspicuous and ineffective object in the urban landscape.
- What really dominates, on the other hand, are the uses of the surrounding lots, which, more than anything else, mark the auto-oriented, out-of-scale and pavement-dominated character of the intersection.
- There are no trees to be seen in the public spaces of the intersection, which could be used to create a viable environment for pedestrians, a practicable buffer to reduce the dominance of the abutting private uses, and as a form to bring the countryside into the city.



### Negatives of current intersection







**Figure B-8:** Existing conditions at the Five Points intersection. Note how many traffic flows transverse the central area and how it is almost impossible for a pedestrian to safely cross at any point. The green area where the fountain is located is nothing more than leftover space. (Source: Studio.)

Two proposals are considered to improve the bleak conditions detailed above. The first projects a roundabout in the central space, while the second proposes a bigger, elongated central island at the center of the intersection. The main purpose was to create a central space with a conspicuous space in the middle to portray a civic feature or monument that celebrates the past, present and future of Fort Valley. This object should be of a scale according to the size of the space, and designed so that it is seen from 100 to 200 feet away by people driving automobiles. Surrounding the circular area in the center would be a 20-foot walkway that would circulate the entire space, allowing pedestrians to transverse the intersection or to rest on a bench with a view towards the central feature. To improve the microclimate of this pedestrian promenade, it is essential to provide adequate tree-shadow; in this specific case, we propose two rows of trees, peaches and pecans, which undoubtedly point towards the past and present of Fort Valley and the reason for the existence of Peach County. Moreover, they would provide a nice changing feature through the seasons, particularly when peach-trees blossom in spring, while buffering the immediate impact of the surrounding strip development. The complete circuit of the pedestrian walkway should be paved in a distinct pattern, probably with contrasting color to the asphalt, and continued even through traffic lanes to psychologically convey to drivers that here is where pedestrians cross. Small islands, that create channels, are placed on each



**Two proposals**



**Outer pedestrian walk with trees**





**Figure B-9:** First proposal for the Five Points Intersection: the circular roundabout. Note the changes in texture in the surrounding pedestrian walkways and the central median on GA-49 with palm trees. (Source: Studio.)

approach, not only to guide drivers in the right direction, but also to provide a refuge to pedestrians and a place for a marker to indicate the name of the road and the needed traffic signs.

Traffic operation of the center-island intersections could be of two different types, either signal operated, or yield-on-all-accesses. Signal operation would assign to each approach a phase, and could be traffic actuated. The main advantage of this type of operation is its simplicity. All traffic on an approaching road has to do one thing: keep right on the central island, circulate counter-clockwise around it and turn right on the road the driver wishes. This configuration makes left-turn lanes unnecessary, as all traffic proceeds into the intersection at the same time. This permits the placement of a 10-foot median on the north approach on GA-49, which substantially reduces the scale of the highway, signaling the entrance into a more urban environment. This median could be planted with palm trees, just as in the railroad depot area, a cue of the past signaling travelers that they were slowly approaching Florida. Lost times between each phase due to the distances between the entering lanes can be minimized by proceeding clockwise on each access and pre-timing each green according to the distance between each road-entrance. It is true that the transversal of an intersection having a central island is slower than having none (as it is now), but



**Signal  
operation**



**Figure B-10:** Second proposal for the roundabout, this time with an ovoid central island. Major advantages: pedestrian access to the central island, safer pedestrian crosswalks and deflection of traffic at each entrance. (Source: Studio.)

designing carefully the signal phase order can substantially reduce the clearance times of the current signal operation. Moreover, a reduction in speed at the intersection is one of the purposes of the central island, in order to contribute to a reduction of crash severity and the transmittal of the message to the drivers of having entered into a nice small rural town in Georgia.

The other type of operation, with yield-signs on all entering highways, is the typical form of operation of roundabouts in Europe, as it is the single most important feature to prevent the lock-up of the central roadway. For intersections with more than five legs, it has the advantage of a higher capacity and lower accident risks for pedestrians than typical signalized counterparts (as in this case), but this does not necessarily apply to the US, as drivers are unfamiliar with this kind of intersection control. Nonetheless, with adequate geometric layout and unambiguous signage (as already present in the new MUTCD),<sup>8</sup> its operation will be fairly straightforward for drivers. Because of its geometry, the circular roundabout would probably operate best under this form of control, while the oblong version would be best to operate it with traffic signals.

The two presented options have both advantages and disadvantages, and a more detailed study should be undertaken to determine which one is the most efficient and/or feasible alternative, or whether there is a third option with better



**Yield-  
operation**





characteristics still. The circular roundabout is the project that occupies less area, so the use of eminent domain can be held at a minimum. Expropriation is necessary in both cases, though, because the radius of the central island has to be at least 50 feet and the circular roadway 30 feet, in order to accommodate big truck rigs, according to European design guidelines.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the circular roundabout, because of its smaller size, has also fewer and smaller channelizing islands, which make transversal of the intersection more difficult for pedestrians, especially when there is no place to stand between entering and exiting traffic. Also, the round island does not provide visual closure to the approach of GA-7 from the north, which, under yield-only operation, could increase the risk of running the sign. These issues are resolved with the elongated island project, with the obvious disadvantage of having to acquire more land. If it is operated with signals, this alternative has the additional advantage of being able to provide pedestrian access to the central island at select phases of the signal cycle. In the end, however, the election of the right option will depend on the balance of the traffic issues of the Georgia Department of Transportation, the urban design objectives of the city of Fort Valley, and the commercial interests of the adjoining landowners.



## Dimensions

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B2</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Five Points roundabout</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Very high   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very high   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | High  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Matching Funds from GDOT<br>City Government<br>Blue Bird, and other area businesses         |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Moving roads and removing traffic signals<br>Landscaping circle<br>Monument on circle       |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Will provide better traffic flow and safety<br>Visual distinction for front entry into city |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | B1  |

**Table B-3:** Summary matrix for the Roundabout at Five Points project. (Source: Studio.)



### 3.3 Vineville District + Housing (Projects B3 and B10)

The Vineville neighborhood is currently an important local-serving node for retail and public activities. At present, Vineville is a residential, institutional, and commercial street with several opportunities for enhanced services and infrastructure. The housing stock is deteriorating, largely due to negligent management, and many structures are vacant or underused. Proposals for this area include housing policy measures, redevelopment of the former high school and Westview medical offices, creation of infill commercial, and aesthetic improvements to the vital neighborhood center.

Commercial improvements, including infill retail and infrastructure maintenance on existing properties, would significantly benefit the residents of the Vineville district, as well as adjoining areas. Redevelopment of vacant property such as the former gas station at Vineville and Park and related mitigation of residual ground pollution would make room for additional neighborhood retail establishments. While the area is well served by supermarket, restaurant, pharmacy, and automotive outlets, possible infill could include services such as a corner store, café, or bank.

The vacant Westview Medical building, currently privately owned and apparently used for storage, could make an excellent satellite clinic for the county hospital. Westview Medical is in adequate condition and adaptable to several uses, including a clinic serving the needs of the local population, particularly Latinos; a western Fort Valley extension of the county hospital; or a telemedicine hub. The site is connected to the Fort Valley fiber optic and wireless networks with connections across three states, allowing communication with many regional hospitals.



**Current conditions**



**Possible improvements**



**The Westview Clinic**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B10</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Westview Clinic</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Low  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Medium   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Very low   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very low   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | High   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Rural Enrichment and Access Program<br>National Rural Health Association Grant |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Non-profit<br>Public   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Create special services clinic with telemedicine facilities                    |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Some medical services are not available at the local hosp.                     |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

*Table B-4: Summary matrix for the Westview Clinic project. (Source: Studio.)*

In addition to enriching the building fabric, Vineville's streetscapes must also be refined. The existing streetscapes are not pedestrian-friendly or aesthetically



pleasing. The presence of civic buildings and a formal fountain on the traffic island make the area a potentially pleasant intersection. Improvements to sidewalks and pedestrian crosswalks would create a safer, more aesthetically pleasing environment for bicyclists and individuals on foot. The area could potentially serve as a functional neighborhood commercial and social hub, a sort of secondary town square in northwest Fort Valley. Textured pavement crosswalks, interesting street lighting, and planting strips would help calm traffic at the intersections of Vineville, Knoxville, and Park as well as protect pedestrians and define a sense of place for the neighborhood.

 **Street-scape must get better**



**Figure B-11:** The intersection of Knoxville and Vineville Streets already has many ingredients to make it a successful neighborhood node. (Source: Studio.)

Recreational facilities in the city include three parks, one public golf course, one swimming pool, tennis courts, one jogging trail, and one country club.<sup>10</sup> The Vineville area, a residential node inhabited by a substantial Latino population is a prime candidate for additional recreation facilities. The former high school, now partially inhabited by the Boys and Girls Club, could be expanded to include community recreation uses. Continuing education and English as a Second Language (ESOL) could be taught in the school in the numerous unused classrooms. The grounds could be easily given over to neighborhood park and recreational uses, such as tennis courts, ball fields, and playground equipment. Day care could also be provided in the facility.

 **Recreational facilities in the area**

A 1994 National Historic Place designation exists along Vineville, near the courthouse. The area is bounded by Knoxville, Vineville, Anderson, and Macon Streets and the Central of Georgia railroad tracks. This encompasses 1,600 acres and 201 buildings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The zone encompasses much of the Vineville neighborhood, with its historically domestic and institutional land uses, and may be eventually extended to protect the additional property. As is stated in the icehouse project, designated sites receive recognition of their significance in addition to possible federal tax benefits, federal assistance for historic preservation, and consideration in planning for federal projects.<sup>11</sup>

 **Historic Place designation**







**Figure B-12:** Housing in the Vineville neighborhood: there are many alternatives for substandard houses other than demolition. (Source: Studio.)

Several programs are available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist with housing needs in Vineville. For low- to moderate-income potential homeowners, Section 223, HUD Mortgage Insurance for Older, Declining Areas allows individuals to purchase or rehabilitate housing in dilapidated areas.<sup>12</sup> HUD provides Federal Housing Administration mortgage for properties that would be otherwise difficult to underwrite due to location or condition of the existing structure. Eligible lenders include HUD-approved banks, mortgage companies, and savings and loan associations. Eligible customers are individuals and families purchasing aging, dilapidated property. The program may also be used to fund multifamily housing located similarly declining areas.



**Programs  
to assist  
housing  
needs**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B3</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Vineville infill housing</b>                                       |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Administrative  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 6 - 10 years  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | High  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | HUD   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Non-profit<br>Public  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Land Assemble<br>Grant Writing  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Will improve homeownership and civic pride<br>May increase population |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

**Table B-5:** Summary matrix for the Vineville housing infill project. (Source: Studio.)



Rental property assistance is also available through HUD. Section 221d(3) and 221d(4) insure mortgage loans for the new construction or rehabilitation of multifamily and single occupancy rental or cooperative housing for moderate-income families, elderly, and the handicapped.<sup>13</sup> Buildings with more than five attached units may be considered. The program sets no income requirements and all families or individuals subject to normal tenant selection are welcome. Specific projects may be designed for the elderly or handicapped. HUD also provides support through the Neighborhood Networks program to develop facilities for HUD-sponsored housing residents to acquire computer and job-seeking skills. The former high school is well suited for a Neighborhood Networks community center.

Generally, the character of Vineville as a local-serving, intimate civic center should be preserved. The green residential strips, instead of being condemned, should be celebrated and restored to their original luster. Prominent infrastructural elements, such as the traffic island and high school should be embellished to increase social capital.

### 3.4 North Camellia (Project B4)

The northern section of Camellia was once (pre-war) a street of single-family homes and small businesses. The character of the street was distinctly something other than what it is today. It would be ideal to recreate that notion of history, yet the realities of the built environment are centered on the commercial real estate market, which dictates development patterns. North Camellia can, however, reclaim some of the lost flavor to again become a place for people and not just a place for commercial activity.

The first step in the process of reclaiming this street is to bring back the uses that create people places. Currently, this section of Camellia does not lend itself well to pedestrian activity because many of the buildings are being used for inappropriate functions. The Coke building, for instance, and one of the most notable and identifiable buildings in Fort Valley, is currently being used to mount tires and as a storehouse for Blue Bird. This particular building merits a different use—one that encourages community gathering—because it is one of only a handful of historic structures with architectural significance. It has the potential to be one a few newly designated heritage sites in town. This designation should offer some clue to its use, but does not imply that the building has to become a museum. Rather, it implies it should become the new activity anchor for this section of North Camellia, regardless of what the new use might be.

In order to restore activity to this building, the city of Fort Valley would need to conduct a land swap for this site, or offer Blue Bird a larger and more suitable facility to house the current activities. Both parties could benefit from this transaction, as the Coke building is busting at the seams with boxes when it could be busting at the seams with commercial/retail/community activity. The Blue Bird functions could find a new home in one of the many vacant—and less architecturally significant—structures located within the city.

The idea of creating an anchor to the street is important from the perspective that commercial activity centers function better when there is a main attractor



**Different  
now than  
how it was**



**Use  
changes  
needed**



**The  
'Coca-Cola  
building'**



that draws visitors to the area, who then spend time at the smaller venues and activities near the anchor building or activity. McDonald's is located directly across from the Coke building and would benefit from an increase in business should the Coke building take on this new role as an anchor for North Camellia. The anchor status would stem from importance of uses on the street and not its actual size and this would result from being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In order for the Coke building to gain recognition as a historic structure on the National Register, the metal shed building attached at the rear may require demolition. This will open up the area behind the building for outdoor social functions.

The greatest barrier to reuse of this building, should Blue Bird concede its transfer, is the cost needed for remediation of the structure as well as the start-up capital needed for a city-sponsored use. The other alternative is to lease the building to a commercial use. In either case, the city will take the lead role in securing the future of the structure in addition to incorporating the heritage site use. Funding sources would come primarily from grants such as the Georgia Heritage 2000 grant, which requires a funding match of 60/40.<sup>14</sup>

Moses' Car Care is another building on this section of the street that was identified as needing remediation and improvements to accept a viable business. Moses' may not be a historic structure, but it presents the opportunity to bring more activity to the area through some sort of recreational use. The site lends itself well to reuses as a club, bar, or other venue that needs large expanses of column-free space. The potential future use, however, is not important, but the recognition of the site as a prominent location is. The building is also structurally sound and, thus, it does not warrant being razed, which is beneficial in any case because it would be cost-prohibitive to raze and replace the structure.

Creating new uses for Moses' Car Care and the Coke building concurrently is the ideal proposition, because the spaces could be combined to facilitate a grand plan for festival grounds.

Even if they are not related in function or use, they could be considered as a group of projects that have a common design theme to unify the structures in some way to create a district character in the same way rural downtowns have similar elements such as street setbacks, etc.

The last element, and one that would tie these two structures together into a "district", is that of streetscape and landscape improvement. While never actually a critical issue in any neighborhood, streetscape and landscape improvements make the difference between a neighborhood of distinction and one that is mediocre. In this case, the improvements would be designed in conjunction with the new uses for the sites. If the two structures are not married in use or function, then basic improvements such as sidewalk improvements and planters would suffice to create some synergistic effects, whereas a combined use and/or function such as a visitor's center (in the Coke building) and recreation center (Moses') would require more consideration and planning to get the desired effect.



**'Moses'  
Car Care'**



**More  
street-  
and land-  
scaping**





Again, it is important to consider not only the structural elements on North Camellia, but also the overall relationship to the district. Should the roundabout at Five Points be built, there will be an even greater opportunity to create a great place for gathering, walking, and commercial activity. There are already places located along the street for people to have a meal and conduct banking business, etc., but the basic premise here is to make these tasks enjoyable while encouraging greater use in the area. This area would be an extension of a revived downtown and new pedestrian focal point in the roundabout. Visually, North Camellia could be linked to both and, physically, it should be linked to both.



**Relation  
to round-  
about**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B4</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>North Camellia area</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Very low   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Low  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Private<br>Public  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Private<br>Public  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Create recreational uses<br>Purchase Moses' and convert into recreation<br>Re-use of Coke Building |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Pedestrian accessibility and safety<br>Visual tie-in to roundabout improvements                    |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | B2, B4, B5   |

*Table B-6: Summary matrix for the north Camellia area project. (Source: Studio.)*

### 3.5 Commercial Heights Redevelopment (Projects B5, B11, and B12)

Commercial Heights needs as much consideration as, if not more than, the North Camellia project. Of primary concern is the oversupply of surface parking in the area. Lack of parking may be an issue for the downtown visitors, but too much parking in this area has made it desolate and unwelcoming when Commercial Heights is nearly the epicenter of town. As such, it deserves the attention of the town as a vibrant neighborhood of commercial activity or mix of uses.

This section of town would also be a connector between a revived downtown and the roundabout at Five Points, necessitating the consideration of uses that will transition well between the two points of interest. Most notable in this



|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B5</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Commercial Heights streetscape</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very high   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | < 1 year  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Medium  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | GDOT,<br>Adjacent Private Businesses<br>City                                    |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private<br>Private Companies  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Non-profit<br>Benches, new lights<br>Peach trees                                |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Pedestrian accessibility and safety<br>Visual tie-in to roundabout improvements |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | B2, B4  |

*Table B-7: Summary matrix for the Commercial Heights streetscape project. (Source: Studio.)*

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B11</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Commercial Heights land assembly</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Very high   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Low   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years   |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | High  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Rural Business Enterprise Grants  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private<br>Non-profit   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Buy vacant land<br>Demolition<br>Remediation  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | To attract industry to this part of town<br>Creation of festivity grounds<br>Draw activities back into the center of town |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | B3, B5, B6  |

*Table B-8: Summary matrix for the Commercial Heights land assembly project. (Source: Studio.)*



area is the Jolly Nut building. It is not the most significant structure in town, but its history for the town makes it potentially a very important structure for the future of Commercial Heights.



**The 'Jolly Nut'**

It is quite plausible to consider the Jolly Nut site as the heritage site that links all the other sites together as a cohesive tourist attraction. It is not completely in the center of every potential heritage site, but the location lends itself well to this use, given the fact that this section of town is very underutilized for even commercial uses. There is plenty of space to accommodate parking, festivity grounds, or even new buildings to coincide with a tourist venue of this sort. Most importantly, this site is very accessible and visible to travelers on their way through the town. This visibility would make the Jolly Nut site the best one for linking all the others under some common theme.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B12</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Jolly Nut historical center</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Medium   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very low   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | The National Trust fir Historic Preservation<br>Georgia Heritage Grants                      |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Non-profit<br>Public   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Remediation of Site<br>Improve Building and those around it<br>Landscaping and streetscaping |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Preservation of remaining historic structures<br>Creates focal point for the community       |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

*Table B-9: Summary matrix for the Jolly Nut historical center project. (Source: Studio.)*

### 3.6 Ice House (Project B6)

While the icehouse is remotely located along the Macon to Florida rail line, possible connections exist via the dirt access road through the orchards and through incorporation into the cemetery and agricultural heritage nodes. The structure could be used as a museum, entertainment venue, or community center. Most importantly, the integrity of the building should be preserved by way of a National Historic Landmark designation.



**Currently not well connected**

The icehouse, although located in a remote area along a minor road, is an integral segment of the history of Fort Valley. The vacant structure that housed







**Figure B-13:** Historical photo of ice being put into railroad cars already filled with peaches. (Source: Marilyn Windham (1997). "Peach County: The World's Peach Paradise".)

the former Atlantic Co. Ice Storage was erected in the 1920s. Within the dense brick walls, portions of ice dating back to the facility's inception remain frozen today. The original brick building is a fascinating glimpse of a bygone era of food processing. Fruit harvested from the area orchards was taken to one of the 50 small packing sheds around Fort Valley, where it was sorted and packed into locally made baskets. The icehouse provided refrigeration for the peaches that were then shipped across the nation by railway car. This structure operated as the mechanism through which Georgia peaches were distributed as a national commodity. The nature of fruit processing has become increasingly mechanized and relegated to the outskirts of town. Today, only one of the original small-scale packinghouses exists; it is vacant. Structures such as the Jolly Nut, the vacant packing plant, and the icehouse are relics of Fort Valley's agricultural heritage and, combined, could become a fascinating attraction for residents and tourists.



**History of  
ice-house  
linked to  
peaches**



**Figure B-14:** The vacant ice house as it stands today (Source: Studio.)



A similar project focused on a peach packing plant in Musella has provided a popular and intriguing meeting place in that community.

To be collectively deemed a historical district, the agricultural properties should be recommended to the National Register of Historic Places. The register considers locations that are associated with significant events, lives of significant persons, illustrate important historical information, or have architectural merit. National Historic Landmarks are nominated and given preferential consideration by theme studies, which are determined by Congress and the National Park Service. Topics relevant to Fort Valley's agricultural heritage include agriculture and the farmer's frontier, travel and communication, conservation of natural resources, and commerce and industry. Therefore, "In order to make the case for national significance, a theme study must provide that necessary national historic context so that national significance may be judged for a number of related properties."<sup>15</sup> Designated sites receive recognition of their significance in addition to possible federal tax benefits, federal assistance for historic preservation, and consideration in planning for federal projects.<sup>16</sup>



To be included as 'Historic Place'

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B6</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Ice house heritage site</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Medium   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very low   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | The National Trust fir Historic Preservation<br>Georgia Heritage Grants                |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Non-profit<br>Public   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Remediation of Site<br>Landscape and streetscaping<br>Wayfinding                       |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Preservation of remaining historic structures<br>Creates focal point for the community |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

*Table B-10: Summary matrix for the ice house heritage site project. (Source: Studio.)*

### 3.7 Landfill + Sewage Plant (Project B7)

The strategy for improving conditions around the landfill is not as clear as the other projects within this district, because the landfill is not easily accessible nor is it visually distinguishable. Furthermore, the landfill poses potential problems for reuse. The site is not suitable for the recreation and festivities that normally



occur on open land. The proximity to the sewage treatment facility makes the landfill a poor candidate for this.

The landfill site can be absorbed into the sewage plant facility, which is also owned by the city, to create a larger facility for phytoremediation (which is the use of plants, trees and grasses to remove hazardous materials from the environment) or groundwater treatment. Further, the clean up of the arsenic residue left from Canadyne's cap at the Woolfolk site could be the primary use for an expanded treatment facility. This type of use would require partnering with technical professionals at the Department of Defense to develop a program of remediation and treatment for war-damaged sites.



**Combina-  
tion of  
landfill  
with sew-  
age plant**

The University of Georgia has a special phytoremediation program in the Genetics department. Dr. Richard Meager, Professor of Genetics at The University of Georgia, an internationally recognized authority on plant molecular genetics and phytoremediation, is the Chief Scientific Officer and co-founder of Applied PhytoGenetics, Inc. (APGEN), a company that has developed and is using selected naturally occurring species and genetically modified plants to remediate mercury, arsenic and other organic contaminants.<sup>17</sup> By seeking partnerships with APGEN, Fort Valley may attract the attention of private investment dollars for research.



**Phytore-  
mediation  
program  
at UGA**

|                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B7</b>                            |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Groundwater restoration plant</b> |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement                     |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High                                 |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high                            |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Very low                             |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very low                             |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 6 - 10 years                         |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Very high                            |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | EPA                                  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public                               |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Create dialog with Utilities         |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Opportunity to clean up landfill     |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None                                 |

*Table B-11: Summary matrix for the groundwater restoration plant project. (Source: Studio.)*

### 3.8 Cemetery (Project B8)

The cemetery surrounded by the Blue Bird property is currently inaccessible from any city, county, or state thoroughfares. Significant improvements are necessary to restore the property to its original condition and honor the resting places of the dead. A prominent access drive should be cut either through the Vienna Street or Georgia 49 side of the cemetery. Cutting through Blue Bird may cause logistical problems due to the private ownership of the land.





The current state of the historic cemetery is not without merit. The headstones, stone gateways, and mature trees are well kept. Certain headstones appear to be leaning and may need structural reinforcement to preserve them. The landscaping could also be improved and a boundary wall built to visually separate the cemetery from the Blue Bird grounds added. The current edge condition is unclear and not monumental in character.



**Current  
conditions**

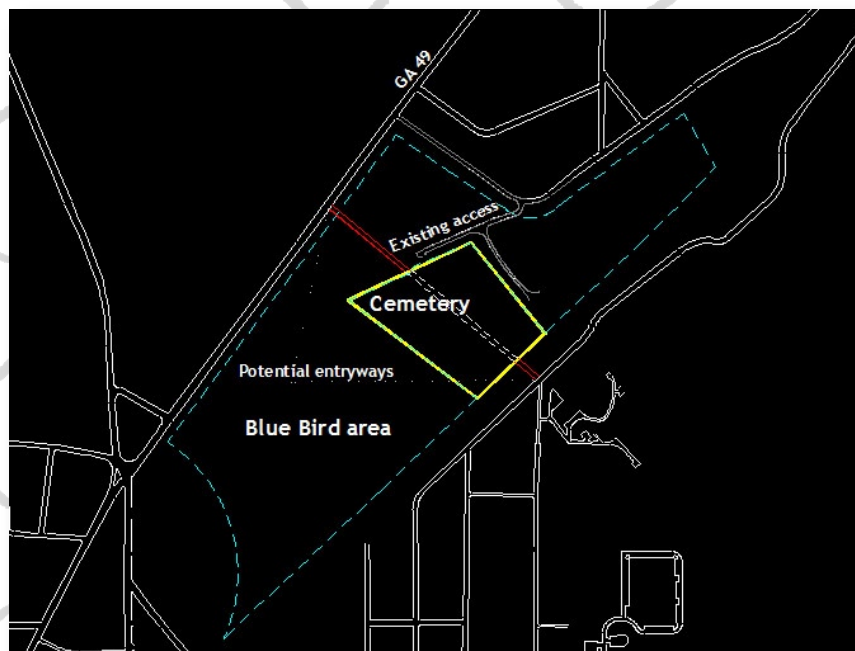


**Figure B-15:** The historic cemetery is overwhelmed by the industrial uses nearby. (Source: Studio.)

Improvements could include additional plantings, an iron or brick wall, and possible incorporation of the site into a National Register of Historic Places agricultural district stretching from Commercial Heights to the ice house. This may be difficult, as the



**Proposed  
improve-  
ments**



**Figure B-16:** The proposed new connection between GA-49 and the railroad, which benefits both the cemetery and the ice house. (Source: Studio.)



National Register does not give priority to cemeteries, gravesites, or religious grounds. However, its association with a larger district may allow its inclusion. Funding for these projects could be provided by a local church, with additional roadway improvement monies provided by the city and county jurisdictions.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>B8</b>                                  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Cemetery</b>                            |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement                           |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Low  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Low  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium                                     |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium                                     |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2-5 years                                  |
| <b>Cost potential</b>           | Medium                                     |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Private church<br>GDOT                     |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public and Private                         |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Create road access<br>Improve grounds      |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Reintegration of cemetery with city fabric |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None                                       |

*Table B-12: Summary matrix for the cemetery area project. (Source: Studio.)*

## 4. Conclusions

Of the three designated districts in Fort Valley, the North is the most diverse and expansive. Disparate land uses from large-scale heavy industry to finer grain residential wards exist within the district boundaries, which stretch across nearly the entire radius of Fort Valley. In order to solidify the intra- and inter-city connections being proposed for the overall redevelopment of Fort Valley, the great significance of the North District must be retained and augmented.

The most notable physical improvement for the North District is the Five Points intersection and Blue Bird approach. Currently, the Blue Bird property and traffic island act as a signifier for entry into Fort Valley; however, the infrastructure and character of the environs have the potential to greatly enhance the image of the town. Improvements to this important city entrance would increase the profile of Fort Valley and serve as an impetus for other redevelopment efforts throughout the town. The high profile of the transportation industry at the front door of Fort Valley is one of the city's paramount landmarks and challenges.

The Vineville neighborhood, in addition to downtown and the Fort Valley State

 **Diversity and expansion**

 **Five Points and Blue Bird approach are essential**



University node, warrants an increase in the quality of local services to its residential components. Commercial, institutional, and streetscape improvements would make this area a secondary node for residents of the Fort Valley area. Much of the high quality housing stock lies in disrepair, and serves mainly as rental units that are not being maintained. Ultimately, the objective of this neighborhood project is the incorporation of the Vineville commercial and residential node into a greater Fort Valley network of connections.



**Vineville  
as neigh-  
borhood  
node**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.ebic.org/gis/pdf/fortvalleyrpt.pdf>> (accessed 10/20/2002)

<sup>2</sup> Survey conducted 11/13-11/20 on Yahoo! Wanderlodge Group by Ann Carpenter.

<sup>3</sup> University of Michigan study for the National RV Dealer's Association: <<http://www.rvda.org/rental/demog.htm>> (accessed 11/5/2002)

<sup>4</sup> <[http://www.blue-bird.com/products/coach/wanderlodge\\_rally\\_xv.htm](http://www.blue-bird.com/products/coach/wanderlodge_rally_xv.htm)> (accessed 10/15/2002)

<sup>5</sup> Fort Valley State University student survey, 2002. See appendix for details.

<sup>6</sup> Henlys Group Annual Report and Financial Statements 2001, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Modern Roundabout website: <<http://www.roundabouts.net/newpage3.htm>> (accessed 11/11/02)

<sup>8</sup> American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO, 2000). *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices*. Washington, AASHTO.

<sup>9</sup> De La Hoz, C. and Pozueta, J. (1995). *Recommendations for the Design of Roundabouts in Suburban Highways*. Madrid, Spain: Consejería de Transportes.

<sup>10</sup> <<http://www2.itt.state.ga.us/edps/Fort%20ValleyPeach.pdf>> (Georgia Dept. of Industry, Trade, and Tourism, *Georgia – the State of Business Today*, April 16, 2002, accessed 10/18/2002)

<sup>11</sup> National Register of Historic Places website: <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/about.htm>> (accessed 10/12/2002)

<sup>12</sup> HUD website: <<http://www.hud.gov/progdsc/223e--df.cfm>> (accessed 11/12/02)

<sup>13</sup> HUD website: <<http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/progdsc/rentcoophsg221d3n4.cfm>> (accessed 11/2/2002)

<sup>14</sup> Administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division.

<sup>15</sup> <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/themes.htm>> (accessed 11/12/2002)

<sup>16</sup> <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/about.htm>> (accessed 11/12/2002)

<sup>17</sup> The Office of Science & Technology within the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism. <[http://smartgeorgia.org/toxin\\_absorbing.html](http://smartgeorgia.org/toxin_absorbing.html)> (accessed 10/23/02.)





# III. Central District



*Figure D-1: Central District's boundary, shown in red, with the location of the proposed individual projects. (Source: Studio.)*

## 1. District Vision

“Fort Valley is an economically undervalued community whose young adults and other workers have been steadily migrating to other communities for employment opportunities, as well as access to services, restaurants, and entertainment. The overall goal for redevelopment is to increase the quality of life for all Fort Valley citizens. Fort Valley will accomplish this through revitalization of vacant, underused, and deteriorating areas in Fort Valley.”<sup>1</sup>

- The Fort Valley Project  
Goals and Objectives

Downtown Fort Valley and the city core will serve the needs of the entire population – resident, student, worker and visitor. By virtue of its centrality, the downtown and its amenities will not cater to simply one constituency, but create public spaces and commercial uses with the attractiveness and flexibility to appeal to certain groups individually, and the region collectively.

The renovated Austin Theater will offer film and theatergoers an intown entertainment outlet, and new downtown restaurants and clubs will provide them



**Downtown  
for all**



a place to eat before and after shows. Fort Valley State University students will have the option of coming downtown for a cup of coffee and a comfortable place to study. And residents and tourists alike will enjoy the interesting exhibits at the Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center.

So too will the central district honor not only generations of Fort Valley residents who have suffered, or continue to suffer, the effects of contamination from the Woolfolk Chemical Plant, but educate future generations as to the potentially harmful effects of seemingly well intentioned industries. The Environmental Resource Center proposed for the area adjacent to the Superfund site will have the potential to foster research gains and breakthroughs crucial to cleaning up the Woolfolk area once and for all.

While these scenarios may sound farfetched given the current condition of the central district, downtown Fort Valley has the potential and the infrastructure to truly serve as the meeting place and entertainment nexus for the city and its outskirts. What must change are not only the land uses and public spaces in the central core, but also the attitudes of everyone in Fort Valley towards the possibilities for their downtown. If the central district is perpetually seen as a repository for timeworn buildings to be torn down, and as an area to serve tourists but not local citizens, then the downtown will be hard pressed to experience any significant revitalization. But if Fort Valley will come together to celebrate its center and make a concerted effort to spend money and time in the downtown, then the city core has a chance to become the vibrant place it deserves to be.

“Making connections” is fruitless in Fort Valley without weaving these new figurative and physical threads through the fabric that forms its core. As Marvin Crafter of the Woolfolk Citizens Response Group says, “What has been tried in the past has not worked. It’s time for something new.”<sup>2</sup>

## 2. General Description of District

### 2.1 Woolfolk chemical site

The Woolfolk chemical site represents the economic, sociological, and historical epicenter of Fort Valley. No other single force has as large impact on the town. The plant served as the primary economic generator of the city, but this financial success was not without costs, as residents must now overcome the contamination associated with the vacated site.

“Beginning in 1910, the downtown industrial area housed a lime solution plant at the Woolfolk property. In 1926, the factory began to produce inorganic insecticides, pesticides, and herbicides for the successful agricultural production of peaches and pecans in central Georgia. The plant manufactured chemicals in liquid, dust, and granular form. Good access to railroad transportation allowed the company to expand to include the processing of oil, sulfur, lead, and calcium. During World



**Superfund  
site close-  
ly related**



**Woolfolk  
largest  
impact on  
Fort Valley**



War II, the chemical factory received government contracts to produce poisonous gas. Finally, the plant returned to the production of organic pesticides, including lead, arsenic, and DDT.”<sup>3</sup>



**Figure D-2:** Woolfolk chemical plant seen from Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. (Source: Studio)

The tension between chemicals and community became more of a concern as the town grew. As the Woolfolk plant expanded south, the post-WWII housing boom caused neighborhood pressure northward. The industrial pollution directly conflicts with quality of residential life. A cooperative effort between business, government, and inhabitants is required to optimize the town’s situation for future generations.<sup>4</sup>



**Tension  
between  
chemicals  
and com-  
munity**

## 2.2 Main Street/downtown core



**Figure D-3:** Main Street Fort Valley looking southeast, circa 1920. (Source: Marilyn Windham (1997). “Peach County: The World’s Peach Paradise”.)

The scene above features Main Street in its heyday, when the commercial and social life of Fort Valley revolved around its most prominent street and





its compact, Victorian downtown. As the hub of railroads moving both goods and passengers, the central district was a bustling place, full of shops, eateries, businesses, pedestrians and automobiles. A history of the community notes:

“By 1921, one third of the peaches shipped from Georgia came from Fort Valley... There were as many as fourteen passenger trains stopping in the small town of three thousand people. Hotels were springing up. There was an opera house, bowling alley, Chinese laundry, two movie theaters, a pressing club, and many other various stores. There were peach inspectors, brokers, and all sorts of people arriving in town connected to the industry.”<sup>5</sup>



**A railroad hub for peach production**

With the automobile and the airplane gradually supplanting the railroads as the most popular methods of shipping transnational merchandise and transporting people, the core of Fort Valley, along with the city itself, suffered as its commercial and civic lifeline was ceded to the interstates constructed throughout Georgia.

## 2.3 Current conditions

The traditional core of Fort Valley has fallen on hard times. A number of the historic buildings in the central district have been lost. Many remain, however, perhaps in different configurations and use-patterns than their heyday, but intact and primed for revitalization if Fort Valley rediscovers its downtown.

The central district is still the hub that links the spokes of growth that have defined Fort Valley in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Blue Bird Bus Company to the north, and Fort Valley State University to the south. The city's remaining historic railroad structures are here, as well as the physical infrastructure that once provided Fort Valley with the trappings of basic city life. The only sector that could still be described as functional, however, is the institutional; the city and county governmental centers and court buildings are still conducting business as usual. A hodgepodge of hair salons, garden centers, electronics and sundry stores, pawn and antique shops, and the occasional restaurant or professional office is all that remains of a once thriving district. Numerous vacant lots dot the landscape, and contribute to the general perception that the downtown is a struggling neighborhood.



**Downtown is still physically the center**

While the random freight train still rumbles through the district, most of the trackage in the central core – and Fort Valley itself – lies dormant. So too do the historic railroad structures - depots and offices during the city's rail era, but now either threatened with demolition or awaiting a higher-and-best use.

There are no residences in the central core, only on the outskirts of the downtown. To the west, the nicest and most expensive homes in the city still occupy prominent locations on exclusive streets. East of the railroad tracks, however, in African-American Fort Valley, single-family neighborhoods struggle against the lapsed economy and the ever-present threat of soil and groundwater contamination.



**No residents**



The Woolfolk chemical plant site continues to be the primary focus of the central district. Only after this downtown property is treated can Fort Valley again realize the vibrant core it once knew. While ongoing efforts in remediation have seen successes, the process is long and arduous. Dealing with the chemical's after-effects will take decades and require a substantial financial investment. While the challenge continues, Fort Valley can capitalize on the opportunities presented as they arise.



## Treatment of Woolfolk essential

Canadyne-Georgia, the company previously operating at the Woolfolk site, began a voluntary cleanup in the mid-1980s. The primary efforts consisted of a soil remediation study, demolition of several buildings, and the excavation and removal of 3,700 cubic yards of polluted soil. Other contaminants were capped in a one-acre plot underground on the property. Capping involves shielding contaminated soil with a horizontal barrier to inhibit toxic infiltration into groundwater and prevent the release of toxins into the air. Canadyne-Georgia also removed soil from 40 neighborhood properties and purchased 20 other buildings, converting them to commercial use.<sup>6</sup>

In the late 1980s, the Environmental Protection Agency began to study the Woolfolk property, and subsequently added the site to the Superfund list in 1990. This designation qualified the property for substantial federal aid. The EPA also notified all potentially responsible parties - the companies that operated on the site - that they were liable for costs incurred during contamination cleanup. Through federal intervention, the EPA now supervises treatment of the land. The EPA determined that groundwater contamination caused by the plant's chemicals represented a direct threat to the town's residents and issued orders requiring that Canadyne-Georgia perform remediation activities at the site. These efforts culminated in the rehabilitation of an ante-bellum farmhouse, the Troutman House, into a Welcome Center and office space for the Fort Valley Chamber of Commerce.<sup>7</sup>



## EPA in- volvement

Cleanup of the Woolfolk property is an ongoing process. In 1998, Canadyne-Georgia constructed a groundwater treatment plant designed to pump contaminated water, treat it, and release it into the city's sewage treatment facility. Work at the plant stopped, delaying this 10-year cleanup project. The Environmental Protection Agency will take over the plant and determine the extent of remaining remediation. The EPA is presently undertaking a \$2 million project aimed at removing contaminated soil from a dozen area homes.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. District Projects

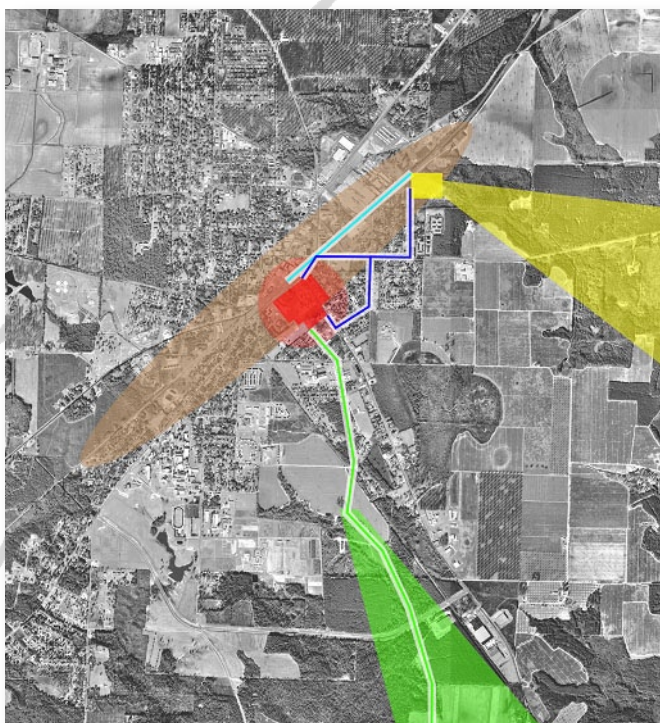
### 3.1 Woolfolk site edge remediation (Project D1)

The impact of the vacant Woolfolk site in downtown Fort Valley extends well beyond its property lines. Over the last century, hazardous chemicals diffused through groundwater and drifted through the air. The fact that the Environmental Protection Agency recently reclassified the 18-acre Woolfolk plant to a much larger 31-acre Superfund site is evidence of the continuing fallout from the contamination.



The community must conduct an assessment of the most troubling channels of contamination and develop a plan to best consider the pollution. The Woolfolk Citizens Response Group, a grassroots organization, and the Woolfolk Restoration Alliance, a coalition of interest groups and regulatory agencies, can undertake this challenge. Regulatory agencies should also monitor both railroad and vehicular transportation routes to the city landfill and assess the risk of contamination due to spillage (Blue on map).

## Risks of spillage



**Figure D-4:** The Woolfolk superfund edge condition. In red, the site itself; in yellow, the landfill and the runoff into Mossy Creek to the east; and in green, the runoff ditch from the site itself, running into Big Indian Creek to the southeast. (Source: Studio.)

The Woolfolk Citizens Response Group and the Woolfolk Restoration Alliance must also continue efforts to study the effects of contaminants in groundwater. These organizations have already successfully examined the impact of chemicals on the municipal water supply, but broader environmental consequences remain. The Woolfolk plant ran an open ditch carrying wastewater along Preston Street that eventually flowed into Big Indian Creek. (Green on Map) The city landfill also lies in a ravine that serves as a drainage route. (Yellow on Map) Finally, storm sewer runoff from city streets ultimately flows into Mossy Creek and Big Indian Creek. These points of water contamination travel southeast into the Ocmulgee River Basin. Agencies must continue to gauge the magnitude of the pollution and treat the major sources of contamination.<sup>9</sup>

## Contaminants flow into creeks

Although Canadyne-Georgia completed preliminary treatment of properties near the Woolfolk site, these adjacent lands require further action to offset the magnitude of contamination. Only after the community finds long-term,





thorough solutions, can the general welfare of central Fort Valley improve. The foremost obstacle is the considerable cost associated with cleanup. Financing this remediation might come from a variety of sources, the initial step being action against liable parties. The companies located at Woolfolk profited for a century without having to incur the external costs of production: pollution.

It should also be noted that research has indicated that successful remediation of polluted land can significantly increase surrounding property values. An analysis of neighborhoods affected by contamination from a smelting plant in Dallas, Texas determined:

“Prices of residential properties rebound after the stigmatized location is cleaned up. This represents the first price rebound finding in the literature concerning housing prices near environmental hazards... (The) price rebound is generally consistent across neighborhood types, although areas that are nearest and poorest seem to demonstrate somewhat slower response... These research findings imply that cleaning up hazardous waste sites generates substantial benefits to nearby residences and that damage calculations around a waste site must consider the price rebound after a site is cleaned up.”<sup>10</sup>

The Woolfolk Restoration Alliance is the organization best positioned to generate funding. The Alliance includes not only concerned citizens and elected officials, but also government agencies and property owners with formidable resources. Cooperation between stakeholders is essential to tackle this enormous undertaking. A collaborative effort can decide the optimal means to channel limited resources for the cleanup effort.

Because private investment in the Woolfolk site is presently unlikely, the City of Fort Valley should acquire the property through the powers of eminent domain granted to the Downtown Development Authority. Control of the property would allow the city to leverage public dollars and oversee remediation efforts to ensure eventual private reinvestment. While this report does not attempt to deal with the Woolfolk Superfund site directly, the hazardous effects nevertheless extend into the surrounding community. Similar strategies used to treat the Superfund site can also assist clean up of the adjacent properties.

The Environmental Protection Agency is the primary funding source for the Superfund site. In addition to financing already disbursed, the EPA offers other technical assistance programs that would aid the treatment of property around the Woolfolk edge. The EPA awards Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) to qualified community groups for a maximum of \$50,000. The community must match 20% of the grant to hire independent technical assistance. The Woolfolk Citizens Response Group is presently employing the TAG. Analysis of effected areas outside the Woolfolk property should continue on homes, business, and groundwater.<sup>11</sup>

In conjunction with the EPA, the Hazardous Substance Research Centers



**Remediation and property values**



**Acquisition by Fort Valley**



**EPA support**



(HSRC) also provides technical assistance for communities with contaminated properties. The Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) uses the resources of researchers and professionals at no cost to provide independent technical information and conflict resolution strategies for solving environmental problems. The TOSC application process favors projects in the early stages, with environmental justice and human health issues, and in communities that are well organized and strongly interested; a perfect match for Fort Valley.<sup>12</sup> (TOSC Contact: Bob Schmitter, 404-894-8064, bob.schmitter@gtri.gatech.edu)

Because the Woolfolk site is on the National Priorities List, it is presently ineligible to receive EPA Brownfield funds. After the EPA determines that sufficient remediation occurred, the Woolfolk property can utilize substantial brownfield funding. Because brownfield grants take extensive planning, it is beneficial for the Fort Valley Brownfields Advisory Group to begin to consider the site.<sup>13</sup> The Advisory Group may also analyze potential projects adjacent to Woolfolk. The Group can continue implement the HSRC program, Technical Assistance to Brownfields Communities (TAB), for this research.<sup>14</sup>

The federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program provides assistance to revitalize neighborhoods, especially those that directly benefit low-to-moderate income individuals.<sup>15</sup> The program is administered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.<sup>16</sup> The Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority can use these funds for such activities as site acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, planning, and assistance. The maximum funds available are \$500,000 for single activity and \$800,000 for multi-activity. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) also offers a Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program where a portion of CDBG money is leveraged to acquire larger federally guaranteed loans.<sup>17</sup> Finally, HUD also provides an Economic Development Initiative (EDI) as a supplemental grant for projects utilizing Section 108 financing.<sup>18</sup>

A myriad of additional federal funding sources exist that apply to downtown Fort Valley. The Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) provide tax and regulatory relief for distressed areas.<sup>19</sup> A community-driven strategic plan is required to receive these funds. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Commerce provides grants and loans for redevelopment through its Economic Development Authority.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development arm provides similar assistance to communities in need.<sup>21</sup>

Downtown Fort Valley must capitalize on its wealth of existing infrastructure. Reuse of historic public investment minimizes the costs to taxpayers and protects unnecessary development in virgin greenfields. To target new industry, the city must first reduce the liability associated with previous contamination. Additionally, the Downtown Development Authority can levy tax-exempt bonds to raise money for site improvements. Tax Increment Financing generates bonds for public improvements, which are repaid with the increased tax base created by new development. The State of Georgia provides a maximum of \$500,000 in grants and loans for infrastructure improvements through the OneGeorgia Equity Fund



**As super-fund, no brownfield funding**



**CDBG**



**Other federal funding sources**



Program. (OGEF Contact: Laura Meadows, 478-274-7734, lmeadows@georgia.org) The Georgia Cities Foundation Program loans a maximum of \$200,000 (or 1/3 of project costs) to redevelop downtowns. (GCF Contact: Greg Fender, 888-488-4462, gfender@gmanet.com)<sup>22</sup>

Given the central location of the Woolfolk site in downtown Fort Valley, it is possible that the site could be redeveloped into a park. The EPA includes recreation within their reuse definition. The Woolfolk plant defined the city historically, and future generations must understand these roots. The erection of strategically placed kiosks informs the community of its origins. The site that brought together the city economically can again bring the community together socially. The State of Georgia offers a Recreation Assistance Fund grant, although the maximum award is \$12,500. (GA DNR Contact: Antoinette Norfleet, 404-656-3830). To maximize the Woolfolk site as a public space, this central parcel must link back into the urban fabric through sidewalk connections and consistent streetscapes down intersecting roads such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive.

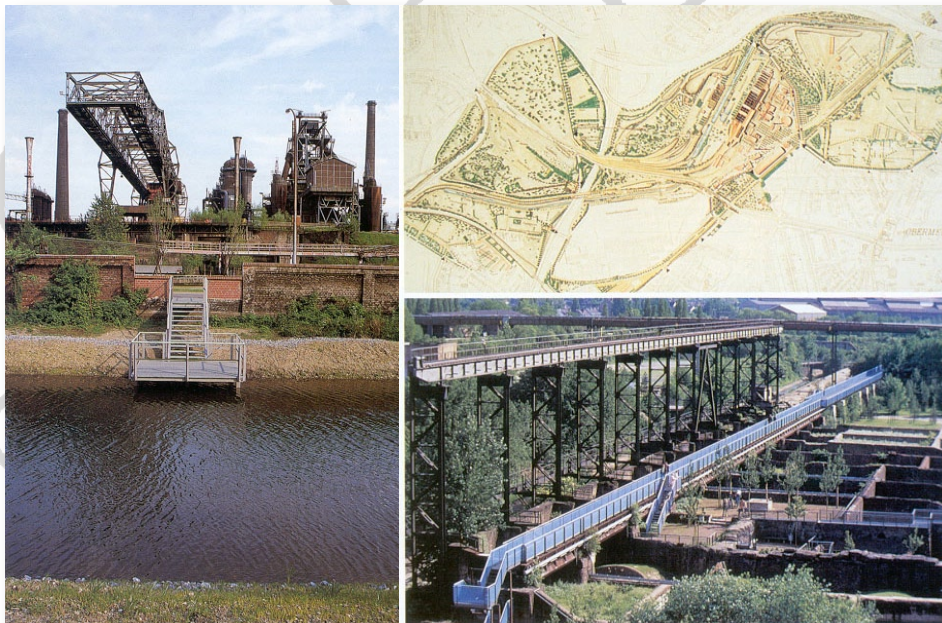
In Duisburg, Germany, the city transformed a former steel mill, which operated from 1903 to 1985, into a recreational center. A landscape architectural firm, Latz + Partner, designed this award-winning industrial landscape plan. The project removed contamination from the site but left historical traces of the existing structures and incorporated those into the public space. Remaining fragments of the elevated railway became a pedestrian promenade, the sewage channels turned into a water park, cooling basins became an ecological water system, the blast furnace now serves as a recreation area, and the former windwheel is now a Romanesque theater. The former steel mill is rewoven into the surrounding urban fabric through sidewalk connections and neighborhood parks. Through this transformation, public activity enlivens this once vacant property.<sup>23</sup>



**Redevelop-  
ment into  
a park**



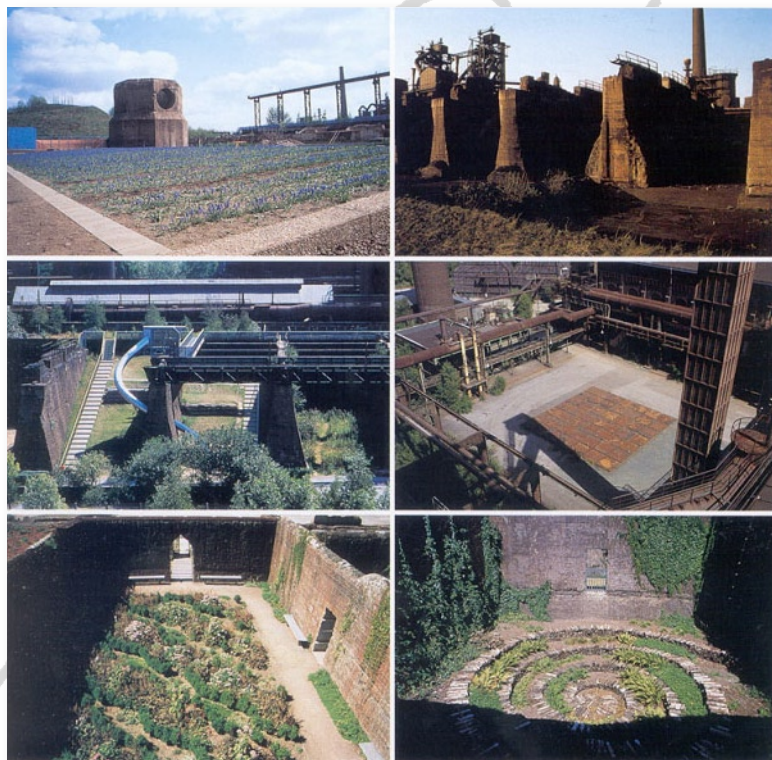
**Internation-  
al  
examples**



**Figure D-5:** The Duisburg Nord landscape park, located in a cleaned-up steel mill. The award-winning project left most of the industrial buildings standing, not only for economical reasons, but to reconnect to the area's past and provide an unusual setting for visitors. (Source: Fundacion Caja de Arquitectos (1999), "Remaking Landscapes".)







**Figure D-6:** More views of the Duisburg Nord landscape park, which in addition of its use as a recreational open space, works as a recycling facility for the city. (Source: Fundacion Caja de Arquitectos (1999), "Remaking Landscapes".)

### Take Action on Section 8 Housing Development

It has been brought to the attention of Georgia Tech that Section 8 housing has been constructed on property adjacent to the Preston Street ditch that may be contaminated. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 8 Housing Program gives assistance to low-income individuals in the form of direct payments to a private landlord, secured from a local housing authority that can be used to rent apartments and homes on the private market.<sup>24</sup> The role of the landlord is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to a tenant at a reasonable rent.<sup>25</sup>

There is a high probability that land adjacent to the Preston Street ditch is contaminated due to its past use. If the land on which this Section 8 development lies was not tested and remediated as necessary prior to building the housing, then the owner of the property is responsible for this contamination even if the owner did not cause the property's contamination.

In 1994, concern that minority and/or low-income populations bear a disproportionate amount of adverse health and environmental effects led to the issue of Executive Order 12898.<sup>26</sup> This order protects any minority or low-income person from disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects. If the property owner can not provide proof to the city that the property does not have contamination stemming from the Woolfolk site, it would be in the city's best interest to call for testing of the site to safeguard the health of the Section



**Housing likely to be contaminated**



8 tenants, as well as to avoid being seen as using federal funds to support activity on contaminated land that poses a public health risk.

It is the city's responsibility to safeguard public health. Further, taking a proactive stance on investigating the property on which the Section 8 housing is located will help to foster a stronger relationship between the city and its minority and low-income citizens. Therefore, the relational impact of this project on the city would be high.

Although the Woolfolk Superfund site is presently a liability to the citizens of Fort Valley, its central location positions it as an asset for the future. Community involvement is essential from the full spectrum of effected interest groups. The magnitude of this project requires maximum cooperation and commitment. As Fort Valley once came together at this location out of economic necessity, it must again come together willfully to revitalize the town's core.



**The city's  
responsi-  
bility**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D1</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Woolfolk Edge Remediation</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Very high  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | High   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | > 10 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Very low   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Environmental Protection Agency: Superfund<br>Potential Responsible Parties<br>State and Local Government  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Private<br>Public<br>Non-profit  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Treatment of open ditch along Preston St and transit routes to landfill<br>Treat and monitor contamination at adjacent residential and commercial properties<br>Analyze Section 8 housing near Preston St ditch to determine contamination and liability |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Central place in Fort Valley - geographically, historically, sociologically, and economically<br>Central location - strong site for future light industrial or public space  |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

*Table D-1: Summary matrix for the Woolfolk edge remediation project. (Source: Studio.)*



## 3.2 Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center (Project D2)

Much of Fort Valley's built history has been lost, succumbing to wrecking balls and the prospect of future development. Remarkably, the city's three former Central of Georgia (COG) railroad structures are still standing despite years of discontinued, or unrelated, use. These unique historical assets should not be squandered as they hold great potential to educate and instruct visitors and residents about Fort Valley's storied past and its crucial place in the network of cities and towns that formed Georgia's rail transportation network.



**Unique  
historical  
RR assets**

Experts on Central of Georgia rail heritage note that Fort Valley's interlocking signal tower may be the last COG tower of this type still left standing, making the structure a very valuable historic asset for the city. In addition, the tower's curved hip roof makes the building even more distinctive and historically relevant. The experts assert that these unique features would almost surely qualify the interlocking tower for government restoration funding.<sup>27</sup>

Architecture aside, the railroad's effect on local commerce cannot be denied. The peaches shipped via ice-cooled freight cars, and the passengers transported by finely appointed rail coaches down to Florida for vacation are both chapters in the same story – that of Fort Valley's railroad heritage. That legacy will be celebrated and perpetuated in the exhibits and displays of the *Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center*. The Center will not only detail the city's railroad experience, but also the founding and rapid growth of the local area's peach industry. By tying the rail theme to the popularity of Georgia's most famous export, the Center will leverage the tremendous national and international interest in the "Georgia peach" to draw the greatest number of visitors possible to the attraction. (Please see the Appendix for examples of other cities' agri-tourism-based strategies.)



**Past effect  
of RR on  
the city**

By acquiring these historic buildings and linking them together with landscaped walkways, patterned hardscape, rail-themed benches, public art and informational signage, Fort Valley can productively reuse its built rail infrastructure, create an aesthetically pleasing and functional central public meeting space, and bring diverse groups together to share in the renaissance of central Fort Valley.

### **Current condition/context**

All three former depot and office buildings are now privately owned and in various stages of reuse, potential reuse or threatened demolition. The land between them is mostly paved and divided by parking lots, the two lanes of Main Street, and the rail tracks that divide the town.



**Ownership  
and future**

The image below was taken from the old rail signal building looking southwest towards the freight depot and Railroad Street. As is evidenced by the picture, Fort Valley's historic railroad structures are not currently connected by any type of element other than the tracks that created their need. But what does connect





them is history, and it is this shared history that may ensure their futures.



**Figure D-7:** Panoramic view of the railroad area, where the spatial relation to Main Street (to the right) is evident. The far structure on the left is the freight depot. (Source: Studio.).

### The freight depot

This 1890s brick structure has a metal roof and nice wood details under the eaves. The one-story structure is rectangular, 45 feet by 165 feet, and sits in the railroad right-of-way west of Commercial Heights. Though a legitimate historic structure worth preserving, the depot is in very poor condition and would likely not survive any type of move. As such, the key to the future viability of the building is to negotiate its purchase or donation from Norfolk Southern, and maintenance of its location in the right-of-way. In addition to potentially compromising the structural integrity of the depot, moving the structure will also imperil its cultural value by taking it out of its historical context.



**Freight  
depot in  
poor con-  
dition**



**Figure D-8:** The freight depot today, looking northwards. The structure is in a bad state of repair. (Source: Studio.).

Because Norfolk Southern – and predecessor railways Southern and Norfolk Western – is itself associated with the glorious history of the U.S. railroads, company officials might be amenable to dedicating this building to the service of rail heritage as a museum or exhibit hall. Its large size and prominent location make the freight depot a good choice for the Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center's major



displays featuring Fort Valley's history. Imagine tourists examining historic pictures of the Fort Valley rails as a modern freight train steams by on the trunk line outside!

The costs of retrofitting this structure will likely be high, more so if the ground or structure is contaminated, but there are numerous potential funding sources for this undertaking. In addition to EPA Brownfield remediation money, other funding sources may include: historic preservation tax credits or grants; philanthropic donations from historic rail groups; private donations from Fort Valley citizens; or quid pro quo monies from Norfolk Southern or another rail company to renovate the structure in exchange for naming rights on the Heritage Center or freight depot building.



**High  
renovation  
costs**

The Federal Railroad Administration – part of the U.S. Department of Transportation – offers an innovative source of funding that holds real promise for the renovation of the Fort Valley freight depot. The following description of the agency's Transportation Enhancement Program is taken from the FRA website:<sup>28</sup>



**Federal  
funding**

“Eligibility: Transportation enhancements (TE) are transportation-related activities that are designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of the nation's intermodal transportation system. The transportation enhancements program provides for implementation of a variety of non-traditional projects, ranging from the restoration of historic transportation facilities, to bike and pedestrian facilities, to landscaping and scenic beautification, and the mitigation of water pollution from highway runoff. Transportation enhancement activities must relate to surface transportation. TEA-21 expands the definition of transportation enhancements eligibility to specifically include the following: provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists... *and establishment of transportation museums*” (emphasis added.)

The FRA contact for this program is: John N. Paoella, Director Industry Finance Staff, Office of Policy and Program Development. He can be reached at (202) 493-6413.

### **Railroad signal building/rail offices**

Even in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this building was “mixed-use,” serving as a restaurant on the first floor and rail offices on the second, according to early Sanborn fire insurance maps. Though its proximity to the rail tracks creates the potential for contamination, in almost every other way this structure appears sound and well preserved. Intricate brickwork, one-over-one double-hung windows and overhanging eaves give the signal building a dramatic character that would serve as a nice change of pace from the freight building in the progression of Heritage Center attractions. A restaurant or gift shop would make a nice first-floor use, with the upstairs potentially utilized for interactive exhibits, life-size dioramas of the rail signalman at work, or even additional track-view seating for the café below.



**Mixed-use  
since its  
beginnings**

This building is also listed in city records as belonging to the Norfolk Southern company. Perhaps it could be included in any kind of package deal with the








**Figure D-9:** Signal tower and Central of Georgia employees. (Source: McQuigg, Galloway, and McIntosh (1999) "Central of Georgia Railroad".)

freight depot if the company agrees to sell its holdings in Fort Valley. In addition, the interlocking tower's unique status as perhaps the only remaining structure of its kind in Georgia, and its distinctive curved hipped roof, would certainly merit consideration of the building for historic preservation funds.

 **Only remaining structure of its kind**

#### **Railroad passenger depot**



**Figure D-10:** The passenger depot as it looks today after the renovation by the new owner. The railroad tracks are on the other side of the building. (Source: Studio.)

This classic 1900 former railroad passenger depot witnessed thousands of arrivals and departures during its years as Fort Valley's main offloading point for town visitors, and is poised for a productive future thanks to renovation work financed by owner Salvador Rodriguez. Mr. Rodriguez plans to open either a restaurant or a gift shop on the site, but the structure would be better served as the "industrial" Fort Valley component of the Heritage Center. Displays, dioramas and exhibits would feature the history of the local peach industry, photos and stories of an earlier generation of tourists passing through Fort Valley on the way to Florida, and photo-montages of the growth of downtown Fort Valley and the surrounding areas. The city should consider purchasing the structure from Mr. Rodriguez, or contracting with him to utilize

 **Potential for exhibits**





the depot as the lynchpin of the Heritage Center complex.

The rendering below is a potential configuration for the Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center.



**Figure D-11:** Sketch showing proposals for interventions in the central railroad area of Fort Valley (Source: Studio.)

### Examples of other historic railroad structure reuse

In Pennsylvania, a heritage site celebrates the Allegheny Portage Railroad, the first railroad constructed over the Allegheny Mountains. “This inclined plane railroad operated between 1834-1854 and was considered a technological wonder in its day and played a critical role in opening the interior of the United States to trade and settlement. Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site is located in southwestern Pennsylvania approximately 12 miles west of Altoona... The main unit contains the Summit Level Visitor Center, the historic Lemon House, Engine House #6 Exhibit Shelter, the Skew Arch Bridge, picnic area and hiking trails.”<sup>29</sup>

In Etowah, Tennessee, the town banded together to save its historic depot from destruction. According to a newspaper account:

“Rail passenger service was halted in 1968, and the depot fell into disrepair. There was talk of tearing it down. However, in the 1970s community leader Edythe Burgess was elected chairman of the city’s



**Other  
success  
stories**



restoration committee and took steps to save the depot. She got it listed on the National Historic Register. ‘That allowed us to received grants,’ said Mrs. Burgess. The restoration became a community project... The building houses community organization offices, as well as a railroad museum with historical artifacts and displays about the L & N and Etowah... ‘The Depot is now the focal part of our town,’ said Mr. Solsbee... ‘Over the past ten years, tourism traffic here has increased, and the Depot has become an unofficial visitor center for the region,’ said Overhill Association Director Linda Caldwell.”<sup>30</sup>



**Figure D-12:** Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site in southwestern Pennsylvania (Source: <<http://nps.gov/alpo/index.htm>>.)

In Grafton, West Virginia, the B&O Railroad Station, an early-1900s structure, began to deteriorate as the railroad industry left town. But restoration plans, in part coordinated by a West Virginia congressman, will transform the structure into a railroad museum slated to anchor a hoped-for downtown revitalization. A “virtual museum” is also part of the plans, as touch screens will allow visitors to view images of the railroad and related exhibits. Original artifacts - including baggage scales and the ticket booth - may also be included in the display.<sup>31</sup>

Closer to Fort Valley, the Central of Georgia headquarters were once located in Savannah. The Coastal Heritage Society (CHS) there now maintains the Historic Roundhouse Complex and the Central of Georgia Passenger Depot. The Roundhouse was recently designated the state railroad museum of Georgia. The CHS keeps locomotives and cars there and maintains them using shop facilities.

Other historic railroad building reuse examples include:

- Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) owns and uses several Central of Georgia Administrative buildings. SCAD often uses them for college functions.
- In Columbus, Georgia, the historic Sixth Avenue Passenger Depot was restored and is now owned by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce,



which uses it for offices.

- The town of Opelika, Alabama is restoring its Central of Georgia and West Point Passenger Depots for civic use.
- Eufaula, Alabama recently restored its railroad Freight House as local Chamber of Commerce offices.

The following are examples of approved rail and rail-related projects under the FRA's Transportation Enhancements Program mentioned earlier in this section:<sup>32</sup>

- Lehigh Valley Railroad Station Project (Pennsylvania) - \$250,000 in Transportation Enhancement Program funds were used to rehabilitate the Lehigh Valley Railroad Station for *use as a railroad museum and visitors information center* (emphasis added).
- Lafayette Depot Plaza (Indiana) - Enhancement funds are being used to supplement a project to relocate the historic Big Four Depot and restore it as the focal point of an intermodal civic plaza.



**Examples  
that got  
federal  
funding**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D2</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Railroad R.O.W. &amp; depot buildings</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement, public space improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Very high   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Very high   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Low   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Low   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Low   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public, Non-profit, Federal, philanthropic  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private<br>Non-profit   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Adaptive reuse of structures as Southwestern Railroad History Center<br>Major landscaping of right-of-way into public greenspace/park area<br>Mitigation of pedestrian hazards caused by rail tracks, Main Street |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Could become the de facto heart of the "new" Ft. Valley and a tourist draw<br>Celebrate/honor the history of the town and stimulus for its growth<br>Bring Ft. Valley groups together in the center               |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

**Table D-2:** Summary matrix for the projects surrounding the railroad right-of-way. (Source: Studio.)





The Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center in Fort Valley would be a grand addition to this litany of railroad structure success stories, and perhaps would outshine them all in terms of total visitation and effect on community revitalization. As an aesthetically dynamic and welcoming central public space, the Center could become just that – a center where Fort Valley residents could unite to celebrate their legacy.

### 3.3 Austin Theater revitalization (Project D3)

“When George H. Slappey outlined his plans for the structure of a theater building on Main Street, he stipulated to the architect that the building was to “have the sumptuousness of a palace, the convenience of a house, and agreeableness of a county seat.” The name was to be that of a “prince,” his friend Bully Austin. The Austin Theater opened in 1916 with ‘Peg O’ My Heart’.”<sup>33</sup>

- Excerpt from History of Fort Valley

During the glory days of Fort Valley’s downtown, townspeople would shell out a quarter, or even a bottlecap, to see a show at the Austin Theater. Those days are long past, but the theater is slowly but surely returning to viability. The key for the 1916 structure was its donation by former owner Marion Allen to the Downtown Development Authority in the late 1990s, and subsequent initial renovation of the building funded by a state grant of \$25,000. Now, the Authority has ambitions to turn the space into an antiques mall, with a café potentially slated for the space as well. Certainly, the theater’s history has been an adventurous one. From uses as diverse as a daycare center and even Peach County’s first courthouse, the Austin has survived “almost a century of wear and tear, not to mention narrowly missing total devastation in Fort Valley’s brush with a tornado in the mid 70s.”<sup>34</sup>



Past and present of the theater



**Figure D-13:** Austin Theater, Main Street, Fort Valley, as it is today. (Source: Studio.)



Though an antiques mall would have certain benefits for the downtown, the Austin Theater would likely have more potential to contribute to the revitalization of its immediate neighborhood if it were retrofitted back to its original use as a performance space and community meeting hall. Not only would patrons be drawn to the downtown in the evening for movies, live shows, and lectures, creating a population to frequent area bars and restaurants after the workday, but the programmatic flexibility of the space would allow management to schedule events that cater to every Fort Valley constituency.



**Antiques  
mall?**

It is interesting to note that one of the first uses envisioned for the renovated Austin was indeed a return to its theater roots. As the Macon Telegraph noted, “‘The idea,’ says Main Street/ Downtown Development Authority Director Lynda Hutfles, ‘is to open a Main Street Arts Center in the old building.’ Revitalization plans call for leasing 2,500 square feet on the ground floor and remodeling the second and third floors to make a 300-seat theater. The seats could be slid beneath the stage to make room for banquets or other events. Hutfles said the facility could be used for plays, concerts or other special events, much like it was originally used from its opening in 1917 until it closed sometime in the 1950s.”<sup>35</sup>



**Use it  
again as a  
theater**

By positioning the Austin as a theater to serve the needs of the resident population as opposed to primarily targeting a tourist element with an antique mall, Fort Valley could “kill two birds with one stone.” An entertainment-starved community forced to travel to Perry, Byron and Warner-Robbins for movies and shows would be given a local outlet for entertainment choices, and visitors to town would have something to do at night that might even keep them in the city for another day or two.

Importantly, Fort Valley State University students would also have a reason to come downtown and frequent area businesses. Research has shown that university students have a healthy amount of discretionary income to spend, and entertainment is one of the top choices for students looking to take a study break by catching a movie or play. Once downtown, they would likely grab a bite to eat, or purchase a new CD, DVD or computer game. (Please see the Appendix for more detailed information on student spending habits and trends.)



**Also  
cater to  
students**

A survey conducted for Georgia Tech by a FVSU marketing class revealed that 84% of 1,176 students surveyed spend between \$50 and \$200 a month in discretionary income. While 22% of students say the number one choice for these dollars is “dining out,” nearly half said they have to spend their money away from Fort Valley due to poor local merchandise variety. Not only would a “new” Austin Theater give students a local establishment to frequent for nights out, but would make downtown a more viable local destination. Tellingly, 18% of students surveyed listed “entertainment” as a vitally important issue in their daily lives, ranking it higher than “restaurant closer to campus,” and trailing only “services closer to campus” and “public transportation” among the survey options offered.

Because a theater space is so functional and flexible, a show that appeals to FVSU students one night can be substituted with a lecture that attracts an older



crowd the next. Ideally, however, the venue will be programmed to draw a mixture of students, adults, families, retirees, tourists, and others to the same event. In keeping with the need for downtown to bring all of Fort Valley together, *the Austin Theater can become the driving force in the central district to foster the diversity that will enable the town to thrive.* If necessary, the DDA could take over management of the theater and program events based on community need.

During the day, a café or coffee house in the former retail space of the Austin would provide an income stream for the theater even when the performance space is dark. Renovating the building's façade, renewing the entryway and restoring the marquee to its original splendor are crucial to the theater's effective reuse. The top level of the Austin should also be kept consistent with its original retrofit for motion picture use, not only for the viability of future screenings but also to maintain the narrative of the building. With free design advice courtesy of Fort Valley's status as a National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street city, and potential rehabilitation funds from one of many renovation-based programs, the Austin could once again become a Main Street jewel.

The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation provides a redevelopment tool called the Revolving Fund intended for the renovation of historic small-town structures. The following excerpt explains how it works:

"The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation established the Revolving Fund in 1990 to provide effective alternatives to demolition or neglect of architecturally and historically significant properties by promoting their rehabilitation and enabling owners of endangered historic properties to connect with buyers who will rehabilitate their properties. The Revolving Fund accomplishes this goal by either accepting property donations or by purchasing options on endangered historic properties. The properties are then marketed nationally to locate buyers who agree to preserve and maintain the structures. Protective covenants are attached to the deeds to ensure that the historic integrity of each property is retained, and purchasers are required to sign rehabilitation agreements based on the work to be performed on the structure."<sup>36</sup>

The Austin Theater qualifies for the Revolving Fund based on the Trust's listed criteria:

- Endangered: the property is threatened by development, demolition, or vacancy.
- Significant: the property is either listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Obtainable: the property's current owner is willing to sell or donate the property to the Revolving Fund.
- Marketable: can a sympathetic buyer realistically be located for the property? Building type, condition, location and price are considered.
- Locally supported: the project needs the support of local government and community groups who are willing to help market and safeguard the property.



**Proposed  
physical  
changes**



**Georgia  
Trust  
funding**



**Qualifica-  
tion for  
Revolving  
Fund likely**





Other potential funding sources for the Austin renovation include:

- Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund
- Georgia Cities Foundation Program
- Grassroots Art Program
- Georgia Council for the Arts Organizational Grants

There are numerous examples of other small communities across America that have successfully renovated theaters, and are seeing beneficial results from these actions.

In Chelsea, Michigan, actor Jeff Daniels opened the Purple Rose Theater in a renovated historic structure. “The theater has energized the small town, making it a theatrical destination throughout Michigan and elsewhere. Purple Rose, Daniels said, ‘is a perfect example of what arts can do for a community. Before we opened, half a dozen Chelsea businesses were boarded up’.”<sup>37</sup>

The old Princess Theater in the center of downtown South Pittsburg, Tennessee, is being rehabilitated by a coalition of area residents and businesses for use as a community arts and performance hall. Local officials hope the theater will one day host community events such as lobby art shows, award ceremonies, concerts, music festivals, dance recitals, pageants and school programs.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure D-14:** Princess Theater, South Pittsburg, Tennessee.  
(Source: <<http://southpittsburg.com/princess.htm>>.)

A small Southern city not unlike Fort Valley, the town of Newberry, South Carolina, restored its old opera house to its former glory and now draws thousands of visitors each year to experience diverse professional entertainment - from plays, musicals, opera, dance and orchestras to well-known musicians in every style. The opera house has also spurred downtown revitalization. A local newspaper



**Other  
successful  
examples**



notes, “(Tourists) scour shops offering arts, crafts and antiques upscale to downscale, dine at restaurants featuring sandwiches to white tablecloth cuisine, then take a walking tour of historic buildings dated from early 19th- to mid-20th century and featuring finely crafted period facades.”<sup>39</sup>

Newberry’s history is very similar to Fort Valley’s. With the arrival of the railroad, Newberry had become a thriving retail center in the mid-19th century, and Lutheran Newberry College was established in 1856. Most of the surviving buildings date between the 1850s and 1940s. Shops and restaurants are now nestled under old-fashioned façades, restored to accent their distinction. Surrounding the business district are gracious 19th-century homes with turrets, spacious rooms and porches, gingerbread and Corinthian columns. Fort Valley has similar commercial and residential infrastructure, and is poised to benefit from any spillover effect a revitalized Austin Theater would create.

All across Georgia, small towns are leveraging their cultural and historic assets to spur downtown development and create local jobs. Renovation and reuse of the Austin as an entertainment venue would be a notable first step towards eventual district-wide growth in business-starts and property tax receipts.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D3</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Austin Theater revitalization</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Low  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | DDC<br>Corporate theater chain<br>Philanthropic/arts organization  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private<br>Non-profit  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Retrofit space for theater use; seats/stage/screen<br>Consider upper floor for café, offices, meeting space<br>Restore façade, especially on first and third floors  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Potential to revitalize Main Street and inject nightlife component into downtown<br>Has multiple use potentials: theater, community space, lecture space, etc.<br>Serves many constituencies while also potentially bringing different groups together |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

**Table D-3:** Summary matrix for the Austin Theater revitalization project. (Source: Studio.)



### 3.4 Environmental Resource Center (Project D4)

In 1998, downtown Fort Valley saw the opening of the new, 15,000-square-foot Thomas Public Library. Construction of the library occurred on previously contaminated land donated from the Woolfolk Superfund site. Discussions with the local community facilitated the decision to build a public library. Financing for the library came from chemical companies that operated on the property. The Thomas Public Library epitomizes the ongoing transformation of the center of Fort Valley from a health concern to a public good. The library is the initial catalyst to spur successful redevelopment of downtown.



**Figure D-15:** The Thomas Public Library, just across the street from the Woolfolk superfund site. (Source: <<http://www.epa.gov/region4/waste/npl/nplga/woolfolkga.html>>.)


An essential segment of the Thomas Library is the Environmental Contamination Resource Center. The Resource Center should expand to provide a more descriptive picture of both the past and the present conditions. Informed citizens need access to information concerning the history of industry in Fort Valley, as well as the knowledge to effectively face the dangers created.

The Resource Center should detail the history of economic development in the city, and the account of this industrious era should include stories of the Fort Valley citizens employed in the chemical factory. The years of labor of the “dusthouse workers” supported not only their families but the town of Fort Valley itself. The dusthouse workers unknowingly incurred great health risks to themselves and to their families when they returned home for lunch and dinner during each day. The Woolfolk Chemical Company and the Town of Fort Valley were primary beneficiaries of the work and health sacrifices made by the dusthouse workers. A memorial statue should honor this sacrifice of the dusthouse worker – a monument that would eventually become not only a tribute, but a symbol of the Resource Center when seen by those passing by the library in close proximity to a chemical factory they may never have known existed.

Additionally, the Resource Center would present information regarding the current state of redevelopment in Fort Valley, including information on the Superfund site and the Brownfields Initiative. Residents need to know the truth about the chemicals that exist within their community, the effects of these chemicals, and the methods to treat these hazards. Educated citizens are potentially more motivated to become involved with the cleanup efforts.

 **Library catalyst for transformation**

 **Expansion of Resource Center**

 **Inclusion of the ‘dusthouse worker’**





The Resource Center can also include site diagrams and redevelopment plans of the town. Residents need to know the direction of community efforts if they are expected to participate. Lastly, any technologies with the promise to potentially offer new, cost effective and environmentally sensitive site clean-up – techniques such as phytoremediation, the use of plants and trees to remove or neutralize contaminants – should be investigated by the Resource Center, and facilitated if possible.

Funding for the Environmental Contamination Resource Center could come from a variety of sources. Grants may be available from the Georgia Historical Society to convey the origins of industry in Fort Valley.<sup>40</sup> The Georgia Department of Education offers a Public Library Capital Outlay Grant Program for maximum of \$2,000,000 toward the construction of facilities. (GA DOE Contact: Thomas A. Ploeg, 404-982-3560) The Georgia Public Library Service is also offering a competitive grant from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).<sup>41</sup> Finally, funding from the programs TAG, TOSC, and TAB (described in the Woolfolk edge section) could supplement information on the present nature of chemicals potentially contaminating the city. The Environmental Contamination Resource Center will focus the power of knowledge in central Fort Valley. The Center must be a community endeavor that includes multiple interests including, potentially, a strong partnership with the Fort Valley State University library. Informed and educated citizens are the only means to prevent history from repeating.



**Possible  
funding  
sources**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D4</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Environmental Resource Center</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Medium  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | High  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | EPA: Brownfields and Superfund<br>Georgia Historical Society<br>State Library Grants  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Non-profit  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Memorial to Dusthouse worker<br>Contamination research related to Fort Valley<br>History of industry in Fort Valley                   |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Recognize historic contribution of Dusthouse worker<br>Inform concerned citizens of contamination, effects, and mitigation techniques |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

*Table D-4: Summary matrix for the environmental resource center project. (Source: Studio.)*



### 3.5 Vacant Church Street lots (Project D5)

In the heart of historic Fort Valley lie two empty lots with great potential. In the past, the properties at 197 and 199 Church Street were home to a filling station and a tin shop, the latter producing headlights for the prominent Blue Bird Bus Company. As local economic shifts occurred, the properties were vacated and the buildings eventually demolished. Redevelopment of this site presents an extraordinary opportunity to revive this land in the city center.



**Figure D-16:** 197 and 199 Church Street today, looking northward. (Source: Studio.)

The Downtown Development Authority currently owns these parcels, and the Fort Valley Brownfield study also includes the Church Street lots. Because these properties are under public ownership, community involvement from all interests in the city must converge at this marquee location to best facilitate productive reuse of the site. The Fort Valley Brownfield Advisory Group should initiate public hearings to garner input for site redevelopment so a collective vision for this property can materialize into an action plan.

The land at 197 and 199 Church Street has great promise for contributing to downtown Fort Valley revitalization. Presently, however, the vacant lots appear fragmented and overgrown with weeds. Before construction begins on the site, the city should consider landscaped parking as a transitional use. It is crucial that a defined plan for the site is developed so that the land does not perpetually remain as parking. During the time the property remains undeveloped, the central focus of this site makes it a prime location for community social functions, including use as grounds for a revived Peach Festival.

Due to DDA ownership of this acreage, the city commands a high degree of flexibility for potential reuse of the Church Street lots. A cultural center here would knit the community together, and provide another useful space for group meetings and interactions. Interested parties such as Blue Bird (headlights) and Fort Valley State University can combine resources to give back to the city through donations of money or equipment for this use. On the other hand, if private redevelopment occurs, the city should consider consolidation of these sites. A public-private partnership could then offer tax incentives or infrastructure improvements to facilitate development. The location could be a prime site for housing, allowing residents to live in the town center while simultaneously adding life to downtown.

The Brownfield Advisory Group completed a Phase 1 and 2 Environmental Assessment on the parcels. These initial tests indicate that contamination exists on the sites. As funds for brownfield redevelopment become available, the city can target this downtown location for these monies. The Community



**Already  
in public  
ownership**



**Flexibility  
about  
possible  
uses**



Development Block Grant (CDBG) mentioned in an earlier section is another source of potential funds. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs also provides two grant programs potentially applicable to the Church Street properties. The Local Development Fund is a matching grant program offering a maximum of \$10,000 for single community projects and \$20,000 for multi-community projects. These funds are earmarked for downtown development, public parking, historic preservation, tourism, recreation, and community facilities.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, the Downtown Revolving Loan Fund provides below-market rate loans to development authorities for rehabilitation. The loan, \$200,000 maximum, is used to redevelop property in distressed historic downtowns.<sup>43</sup>

 **CDBG grants as an alternative**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D5</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Vacant downtown lots</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Medium  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Community Development Block Grant<br>EPA: Brownfields grant<br>State redevelopment incentives                             |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Downtown Development Authority<br>Community Input   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Community must decide highest and best use<br>Possible landscaped parking as transitional use<br>Possible cultural center |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Central location downtown<br>Public investment could spur downtown development  |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

*Table D-5: Summary matrix for the vacant downtown lots project. (Source: Studio.)*

### 3.6 Brownfields affected by Woolfolk site (Project D6)

#### **Anthoine's Machine Shop, Usher's Temple, and Lyrics Lounge**

Anthoine's Machine Shop and Usher's Temple represent irreplaceable cultural capital in downtown Fort Valley. Another establishment, Lyrics Lounge, reveals a site of social interaction in the center of town. All three properties represent the heritage of Fort Valley. Additionally, these properties are located adjacent to the Woolfolk Chemical site. The buildings are a high priority because of their historic importance and potential contamination.





Anthoine's Machine Shop is the oldest business in Fort Valley under continual family ownership. In the mid 1880s, when the town was in its infancy, J.W. Anthonie moved from Maine and established a machine shop to support the burgeoning cotton industry. Once the Southwestern Railroad was built, the town shifted around the shop, then owned by Tom Anthoine.

**Anthoine's  
part of the  
history of  
Fort Valley**



**Figure D-17:** Current situation of buildings of Anthoine's Machine Shop. (Source: Studio.)

The next affected brownfield site has an equally historic past. Even though the property originally housed the city's first white academy, Usher's Temple took over the site in 1866 and became the first organized African-American church in Fort Valley. The church is symbolically important because of its rich cultural heritage, and historically important because Fort Valley State University grew out of efforts initiated by members of Usher's Temple.

**Usher's  
Temple:  
first African  
American  
Church**



**Figure D-18:** Historic Usher's Temple (left) and as it stands today (right). (Source: Marilyn Windham (1997). "Peach County: The World's Peach Paradise", and studio.)

It is essential that the Woolfolk Citizens Response Group include stakeholders from Anthoine's Machine Shop, Usher's Temple, and Lyrics Lounge – a structure on the eastern edge of the Superfund site - in their planning discussions. These parties provide indispensable perspectives relating historic context to future use. Due to potential contamination, these sites are eligible for financial assistance from the EPA, CDBG, and Georgia redevelopment programs (described in the Woolfolk edge section). Whenever possible, these buildings should continue to operate under their existing uses to ensure preservation of culture in the city.

**Inclusion  
of stake-  
holders in  
Woolfolk  
process**

Because these three properties are historically significant, they may be entitled to

historic preservation funding resources. If successfully listed on the National Register of Historic Places, they are at an additional advantage for preservation funds. Usher's Temple is a strong candidate for Register listing due to its significant historic value and continued maintenance. Although religious structures typically are not eligible for National Register historic designation, exceptions are made if these structures contributed crucially to secularly important events such as the founding of Fort Valley State University.



**Structures  
historically  
significant**

Properties listed on the National Register are eligible to take advantage of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Heritage Grants. The grant provides a maximum of \$40,000 for a development project and requires 40% local matching funds.<sup>44</sup> The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation also offers a revolving loan with below-market interest rates for qualified rehabilitation projects. Finally, the State of Georgia distributes federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits through a competitive process.<sup>45</sup> All of these tools should be considered for renewal, renovation or remediation of these historic Fort Valley properties.

### **Martin Luther King Drive brownfield projects**

"Site 17," located at 700 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, is the former home of the Department of Family Services offices. The building is currently vacant and would not require any structural rehabilitation before occupancy. The structure currently sits on a .58-acre parcel and has an assessed value of \$160,084. Any redevelopment project is contingent on contamination; however, the probability of any type of contamination of the site is low. Ultimately, the community and the context of the surrounding neighborhood will determine the highest-and-best-use for Site 17.



**Situation  
of sites on  
MLK**

Jazz's Car Care is located at 601 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. Currently, an auto washing business is located on the site. The former use of the site was an Amoco gas station; however, the underground storage tanks have been removed, and the site has been cleaned. Because a viable business is in operation, no recommendations for uses are suggested for this site.

Bargain Town is located at 607 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. The building is a metal structure and is currently vacant. Any redevelopment project is contingent on contamination. As for the other sites in the area, the community and the context of the surrounding neighborhood will determine the highest-and-best-use for this property.

"Site 29" is a vacant lot located off of Spruce Street. This parcel is adjacent to the Preston Street ditch, which was used to carry runoff from Woolfolk Chemical Works to Big Indian Creek. Due to its proximity to the ditch, the probability of contamination of the lot is likely to be high. Any redevelopment project is contingent on contamination. Therefore, a logical first step for reusing this site would be to conduct a Phase 1 and Phase 2 contamination analysis to determine if there are any chemicals in the ground that would impede effective redevelopment.

The properties located on Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive provide strong redevelopment potential for Fort Valley. Because MLK already exists as a



commercial node, new businesses can renovate vacant buildings and again make the corridor economically viable. The area could be a prime location for a new charter school given the large land areas and accessible location. Because public infrastructure, such as roads, sewer, water, and power are already in place, the additional costs to Fort Valley taxpayers are minimized.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D6</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Brownfields affected by Woolfolk</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | National/Georgia Trust<br>Community Development Block Grant<br>EPA: Brownfields / Superfund      |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Private<br>Public<br>Non-profit  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Restoration / site improvements<br>Reclaim historic character<br>Monitor and treat contamination |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Historic foundations of Fort Valley<br>Incorporate owners into community vision                  |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

*Table D-6: Summary matrix for the project related to brownfields affected by the Woolfolk plant.  
(Source: Studio.)*

### 3.7 Main Street façade reconstructions (Project D7)



*Figure D-19: Example of façade reconstruction for the Music Hall in Covington, Georgia. (Source: Georgia Trust.)*





Main Street Fort Valley is no longer bustling with the activity it once had. As the railroad's prominence in Fort Valley faded, the ensuing dominance of the automobile, combined with the lure of inexpensive land, drove new development to the city's edge. While this was typical of many American towns – large and small – a new “back to the city” trend is taking hold in Georgia, and nationally. Suburban residents are longing for the community-oriented nature of traditional town development. People prefer the freedom to walk between activities without feeling obligated use a car. The prototypical American Main Street has always been the archetypical location for the benefits associated with this type of traditional small town life.



**Downtown activity is not what it was**



*Figure D-20: Images of Downtown Fort Valley. (Source: Studio.)*

Even though years of disinvestment have left downtown Fort Valley appearing bleak, renewal of the public space will restore civic pride to the center of the city. The restoration of building façades on Main Street will rededicate the street to the pedestrian, with a scale and visual interest conducive to strolling and window-shopping. Often, a simple coat of paint, or detailing of some sort, is enough to retrofit black façade walls for improved aesthetic value. Other times, false façades carefully removed from building exteriors reveal original, intricate historic features underneath. The façades in Fort Valley will have to be professionally examined to determine, a) what has been done to them, and, b) what can be done to return them to their former Victorian glory.



**Pedestrian-oriented design important**



*Figure D-21: Existing Main Street façade condition. (Source: John Skach.)*



An initial strategy may include the re-installment of traditional windows into one or two prominent Main Street buildings. The storefront space created can be illuminated near the front of the building to suggest habitation. This will begin to demonstrate the value of a lively town center. This newfound appreciation can serve as a catalyst to foster further renovations. Additionally, the development of Main Street Design Guidelines can assist property owners deciding to rehabilitate their buildings. The incorporation and enforcement of design guidelines provide consistency for a district and an assurance to property owners that their investment will be protected. Fort Valley should also develop a strategy for storefront leasing along Main Street. Community input is essential to understand which specific types of retail investment are targeted.

 **Upper-story windows**

When supplemented with sidewalk benches, street trees, and adequate lighting, the public realm is improved and so is the general welfare of those who frequent it. The picture below of Bainbridge, Georgia, demonstrates the aesthetic appeal of a renewed Main Street. Because the Downtown Development Authority runs the Main Street program, the DDA is well positioned to create a similar, and substantial, visual impact in downtown Fort Valley.

 **Street furniture**



**Figure D-22:** Main Street, Bainbridge, Georgia. (Source: John Skach.)

The National Trust's Main Street Center<sup>46</sup> program and the Georgia Trust's Main Street Design Assistance<sup>47</sup> programs provide technical assistance for rehabilitating the public realm downtown. Design assistance is available for specific structures as well as historic districts. Additional funding is available once a district is designated on the National Register. The Fort Valley Main Street program should apply for designation as a Historical District so that it is eligible for these grants. (See historic preservation, section VI.) The rehabilitation of downtown façades with public money will likely facilitate private investment, generating an increase in the local tax base.

 **Technical assistance and funding**

Another economic benefit of historic preservation is the attraction of visually interesting city spaces for those who market and practice heritage tourism. A vibrant downtown not only draws in visitors between attractions, but also serves as an attraction in and of itself. A renewed Fort Valley cityscape will foster a sense of community among local residents and go a long way towards

facilitating overall central district revitalization. The Main Street program within the Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority is well positioned to take advantage of this unique cultural heritage.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D7</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Façade reconstructions</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | High   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | National/Georgia Trust Main Street Program<br>Community Development Block Grant  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Downtown Development Authority - Main St Program<br>Public<br>Private - potentially the building owner   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Establish historic district on Main St<br>Establish historic façade design guidelines<br>Plan a phased-in façade reconstruction                    |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Historic (walkable) Fort Valley downtown<br>Physical improvements facilitate community pride<br>Instigates private investment and heritage tourism |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

*Table D-7: Summary matrix for the façade reconstruction project for Downtown. (Source: Studio.)*

### 3.8. Former hotel at Church Street & Commercial Heights (Project D8)

Less ostentatious and pricey than the Hotel Winona on Main Street, the hotel on Church Street across Commercial Heights from the railroad tracks welcomed travelers fresh off the train and provided them affordable lodging for their stay in Fort Valley. One of three hotels in the city, and one of two surviving, the building later served as a rooming house, a pawn shop, and numerous other uses over the years. It now sits vacant.

As a historic structure and an important part of the history of downtown Fort Valley, the former hotel is potentially eligible for listing on the national or state historic registers. Aesthetically, the building is likely not qualified for historic designation, but as a cog in the engine of local growth and an important waystation for travelers heading to Florida for work or holiday, the old hotel is a more viable case for register listing.

 **One of 3 historic hotels in city**







**Figure D-23:** Peach State Pawn, now vacant - formerly a hotel and the “Basset Rooming House”. (Source: Studio.)

Even if a historic imprimatur cannot be achieved for the former hotel, the building is still a very crucial link in the scheme of downtown Fort Valley and deserves a use in keeping with its anchorage of the eastern downtown district. Concurrent with the development of the Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center, the building can become a vital cog in the downtown’s revitalization, and could serve an important ancillary purpose for the Heritage Center.

Potential uses for the building, if renovated, include:

- A boutique hotel
- Antiques mall
- Community meeting hall
- Retail outlet
- Children’s daycare center
- Restaurant
- Night club/dance club
- Live music venue
- Art gallery
- Community arts space and bazaar

These uses are simply suggestions. Ultimately, the highest-and-best-use for the property should be determined by the community and property owner, working together to ensure that what’s good for downtown Fort Valley – nightlife, cultural outlets, restaurants, etc. – is also beneficial from a profit standpoint for the property owner. It is assumed that to achieve this high level of utility, the building will need significant repair and remediation. Whether these improvements are financed by the property owner or the DDA (if they choose to purchase the building from Moss) is undetermined at this time. However, grant monies may be available to assist with the renovation of the structure depending on the ultimate commercial use chosen.

In a best-case scenario, the Southwestern Railroad Heritage Center becomes a reality – and then a success – and a need develops for a boutique-type hotel in



**Alternatives for uses**



**Final decision by community and market**



the downtown. Such uses are very common in revitalizing Victorian downtowns, and serve to augment the heritage tourism experience. If the community senses a need for such a hotel, and the property owner agrees, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation has grants available for renovations of this type if the building qualifies for listing.

The Georgia Trust's Revolving Fund, mentioned earlier in this plan in reference to the Austin Theater, is also a potential source of renovation funds for the former Church Street hotel. In fact, Revolving Fund monies have already contributed to the protection of another small-town Georgia hotel threatened with demolition.

In Bainbridge, Georgia, the 1902 Bon Air Hotel was an ailing physical reminder of the town's notable past. However, when demolition threatened this historic downtown landmark, a local activist asked the Georgia Trust to intervene on the town's behalf and find a preservation-minded buyer for the Bon Air. Through its Revolving Fund program, the Georgia Trust began discussions with Hal Carter, a developer from Sylvester, Georgia. Carter eventually purchased the building. According to the Georgia Trust's website, "Carter has restored several loft apartments in Sylvester, as well as a hotel similar to the one in Bainbridge. He plans to utilize all floors of the Bon Air effectively. His plans include retail space on the first floor, a restaurant, lounge and office space on the second floor and loft apartments on the third floor. According to Frank White, Revolving Fund director, since 1990 the fund has provided effective alternatives to demolition or neglect of architecturally and historically significant properties by promoting their rehabilitation."<sup>48</sup>



**Example  
in Bain-  
bridge, GA**



**Figure D-24:** Bon Air Hotel, Bainbridge, Georgia. (Source: John Skach.)

The Fund was originally designed to renovate houses, but commercial buildings are increasingly appearing on the Fund's radar.

Another compelling potential use for the former Church Street hotel is as a community arts and crafts bazaar. The advantages of this application are its contribution to the visioning of downtown Fort Valley as an inclusive gathering place where diverse city groups can come together for the ultimate benefit of all involved. In the context of a community arts and crafts bazaar, this dynamic



**Use as an  
arts &  
crafts  
bazaar**



would allow local artisans, artists, antiques collectors, and anyone else with a salable product to rent out designated spaces in the Church Street building to peddle their wares. Not only is there a social component, but an economic development one as well. Residents wishing to make a little extra money, or those with authentic ambitions to start their own small businesses, could have an outlet for these pursuits.

On top of the benefits for the sellers, the arts and crafts bazaar would add a unique, interesting, fun and ever-changing component to the downtown retail landscape. The bazaar may become a tourist draw, as well.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D8</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Former hotel at Commercial Hts. &amp; Church</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Low  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Medium   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Low  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Low  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Private - potentially the building owner<br>Public - DDC to buy and retrofit, or state preservation funds  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Private<br>Public  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Build out interior for partitioned indoor bazaar spaces<br>Restore all windows and façade integrity<br>Include café or food court in the interior space w/ terrace dining  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Potential for small-business development; entrepreneurial initiative<br>Can be a community gathering area, almost like a European public market<br>Adds dynamism to downtown, and also has potential interest for tourists |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | D2   |

**Table D-8:** Summary matrix for the Church street old hotel building project (Source: Studio.)

In Oakland, California, a successful version of the community arts market has been operating for a number of years. The city's Craft and Cultural Arts Department describes the market as follows:

Oakland Artisan Marketplace is a public service for the artist community, the public and the City of Oakland. The marketplace's most positive and truly important contribution to our society lies in its impact upon the lives of artists and crafts people themselves. The program does not "create jobs" but allows the artists to create a job for themselves within



**Example in  
Oakland,  
CA**





the program on his or her own effort and definition of success. We strive to showcase Oakland by promoting quality craft, quality business practices, and quality ambiance maintained by a community of artisans that represents Oakland's creativity diversity at its best.<sup>49</sup>

The goals of the Oakland marketplace are to:

- Create destination area(s) that will attract visitors and residents to purchase unique arts and craft products produced in Oakland and by other regional artists.
- Provide a mechanism for Oakland and other artists to sell their handcrafted artwork.
- Encourage the development of the arts and crafts community.
- Encourage existing business areas without creating competition of retail businesses.
- Create a positive streetscape in designated community development areas.

A program of this type might have numerous benefits for Fort Valley, and serve as a relatively low-cost strategy for revitalizing a vacant building. Regardless of the usage determined for the former Church Street hotel, its potential to draw visitors into the downtown from Commercial Heights should not be underestimated.

### 3.9 Lowe Street/Church Street vacant lot (Project D9)

Sanborn maps from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reveal that the triangular-shaped lot at the corner of Lowe Street and Church Street was once the location of the town blacksmith's shop. The smith plied his trade on the site from 1885 to 1920, at which time the location became home to a grocery store. Currently, the site lies fallow; however it is anything but unkempt. Neatly trimmed grass covers the area, while attractive street trees and streetlights line its northern edge.



Past uses



**Figure D-25:** The vacant lot at the corner of Church and Lowe Streets, opposite the passenger railroad depot. (Source: Studio.)

Because this greenspace “infrastructure” already exists and is well maintained, only a scant cost and effort would be needed to turn this lot into an official city



park. The prominent site and downtown location, however, demand that this park have a special component to make it a true attractor for local residents. This could be accomplished by making the site a children's play park, complete with slides, swings, climbing equipment, merry-go-rounds, and seesaws. No park of this kind currently exists in the core of the central district, so the addition of this amenity for families visiting the downtown or residing nearby would be a real draw for the area.

The DDA does not currently own this parcel. The owner is not local; he resides in Glendale, AZ. The odd-shape of the lot makes it unlikely that a conventional structure could be built there. The low valuation of the land (it was most recently assessed at \$8,162.00) not only adds to the viability of its purchase, but also may contribute to the owner's willingness to sell or donate the property to the city, perhaps in exchange for park naming rights.

Of course, if in the future a more logical and viable use for the site is suggested – i.e., new construction of some sort – then the children's play park could be relocated across Lowe Street to the landscaped grounds of the railroad station. This would also revive the notion of the historic railroad gardens of old.

 **Proposed use: park**

 **Purchase by DDA**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D9</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Former tin shop site/vacant lot</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | medium   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | High   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | < 1 year   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | High   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public - DDA purchase site and buy playground equipment<br>Private - Blue Bird, others may donate funds for play equipment   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Landscape vacant lot into a public park<br>Purchase children's play equipment, benches<br>Construct sandbox or other type of play area                                     |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Supervised children's play space needed downtown<br>Potential for community meeting/greeting space and for parents to get together<br>Serves every Ft. Valley constituency |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

*Table D-9: Summary matrix for the Lowe Street vacant site project (Source: Studio.)*

As for now, however, the play park concept for this vacant site is also congruent with the aim for downtown to bring the Fort Valley community together. As



parents gather to watch their children have fun in the park, conversations will start up, acquaintances will be made, residents will meet visitors and vice versa, and the potential for connections formed between different groups in Fort Valley will be facilitated.

From a vacant lot could be born a true source of community pride. Low to no acquisition costs might leave funds left over for quality playground equipment and park infrastructure like benches, water fountains and community bulletin-board/kiosks. Another strategy would be to approach local institutions like Blue Bird Bus Company or Fort Valley State University about possibly donating money to purchase play equipment. Blue Bird and FVSU might be further sold on the idea if allowed to fabricate climbing apparatuses in the shape of a big yellow school bus, or a prowling FVSU Wildcat.



**Conversion into a local meeting place**

### 3.10 Former soda water bottling site/café (Project D10)

This shuttered former bottling plant and restaurant site is situated near the intersection of Church Street and Lowe Street; the booths, tables, neon beer sign and restaurant equipment from the previous tenant wait temptingly inside.



*Figure D-26: The two historic buildings in their urban setting along Church St. (Source: Studio.)*

As seen in the above photo, the building shares the block with a still-open record store, and sits across a paved driveway from Fred's sundry and grocery store. The two-story former restaurant has a lot size of 1827 square feet and a limited, but useful, number of parking spaces behind. The façade is of stucco and wood, and has seen better days, but would likely return to splendor with a couple coats of paint and some wood fill.



**Current conditions**

Because the interior café is still intact, it follows that a valid reuse for the structure would be as a restaurant and/or bar. Depending on the condition of the café infrastructure, a buyer for the space might save hundreds of dollars in sunk costs on restaurant equipment. This reality makes the site a potentially cost-effective risk for a local, regional or national entrepreneur willing to take a chance on the future viability of downtown Fort Valley. If some of the variously proposed projects around Fort Valley have not yet come to fruition, a buyer may nevertheless be sold on the property based on momentum building for area revitalization.



**Reuse as café likely**





While a café would seem to be the logical use for this structure, any viable commercial enterprise could be encouraged to add life to this strategically located downtown block.


|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>D10</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Former soda water bottling site/café site</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Very low  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Low   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Medium  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public - DDA<br>Private - investor who wants to open a restaurant   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Construct viable café space, including investing in new equipment<br>Refurbish façade, add signage  |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Downtown needs restaurants/bars as gathering spaces and to serve student population<br>Service patrons downtown for cultural activities, shopping |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | D2  |

*Table D-10: Summary matrix for the former soda bottling/café site project (Source: Studio.)*

## 4. Conclusions

Currently, the central district of Fort Valley is undervalued and underused. By facilitating a handful of key projects in the area, the city can begin a process of downtown revitalization that would have significant spillover effects for the rest of Fort Valley, including the parts of town struggling to emerge from the shadow of Woolfolk contamination.

A healthy central district with a true nightlife and interesting attractions and amenities holds the potential to draw every local constituency downtown to experience Fort Valley's renewal. Mingling with tourists and visitors from the region, Fort Valley residents would not only reconnect with each other, but potentially form new relationships as well.

 **Downtown undervalued and underused**

 **Attraction for all groups**



## Notes

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<sup>4</sup> Middle Georgia Regional Development Center. Redevelopment Plan – Woolfolk Chemical Works Site. Economic Development Administration. Fort Valley, GA. 1999.

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<sup>6</sup> MGRDC

<sup>7</sup> EPA

<sup>8</sup> Fain, Travis. "EAP Supervising Latest Round of Cleanup Near Woolfolk Site." *The Macon Telegraph*. November 17, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Available: <[www.epa.gov/region4/waste/npl/nplga/wolfokga.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region4/waste/npl/nplga/wolfokga.htm)>, accessed November 2002

<sup>10</sup> Available: <<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/mthayer/dallas2.PDF>>, accessed November 2002

<sup>11</sup> Available: <[www.epa.gov/superfund/tools/tag/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/tools/tag/index.htm)>, accessed November 2002

<sup>12</sup> Available: <[www.toscprogram.org/tosc-overview.html](http://www.toscprogram.org/tosc-overview.html)>, accessed November 2002

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<sup>17</sup> Available: <[www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/108/index.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/108/index.cfm)>, accessed November 2002

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<sup>21</sup> Available: <[www.rurdev.usda.gov/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/)>, accessed November 2002

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<sup>28</sup> [http://www.fra.dot.gov/policy/RailProjectPlanningandFinancingGuide\\_4e.htm](http://www.fra.dot.gov/policy/RailProjectPlanningandFinancingGuide_4e.htm), accessed November 2002

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<sup>45</sup> Available: <[www.georgiatrust.org/revfund.html](http://www.georgiatrust.org/revfund.html)>, accessed November 2002

<sup>46</sup> Available: <[www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)>, accessed November 2002

<sup>47</sup> Available: <[www.georgiatrust.org/mainstr.html](http://www.georgiatrust.org/mainstr.html)>, accessed November 2002

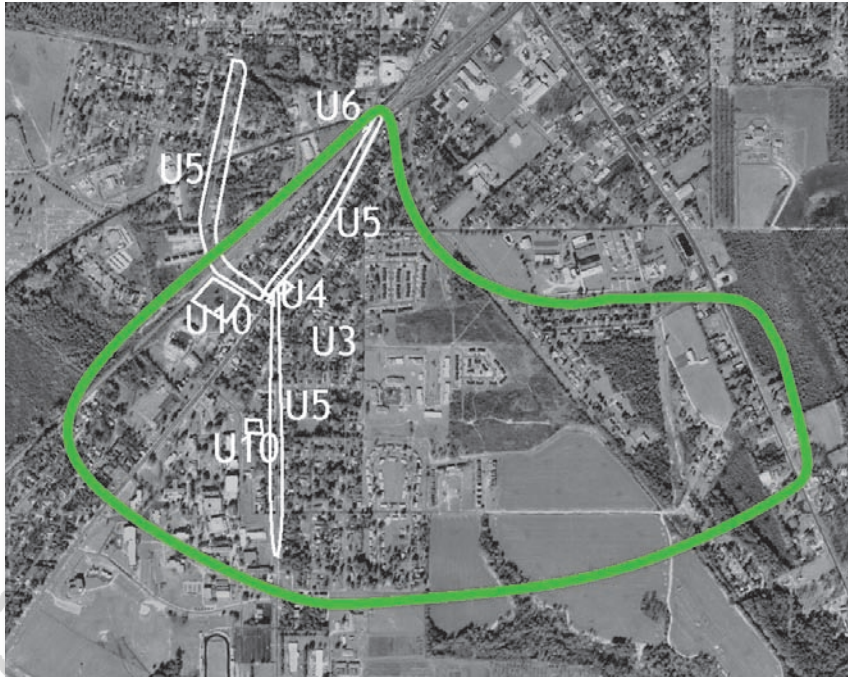
<sup>48</sup> Available: <<http://www.georgiatrust.org/News/bonairhotel.html>>, accessed November 2002

<sup>49</sup> Available: <<http://www.oaklandculturalarts.org/main/oaklandartisanmarketplace.htm>>, accessed November 2002





# IV. South District



*Figure U-1: South District's boundary, shown in green, with the location of the proposed individual projects. (Source: Studio.)*

## 1. District Vision

Historically, Fort Valley State University and its surrounding community were physically and figuratively on the other side of the tracks from downtown and the more prosperous northern neighborhoods. The city did not respond well to the needs of Fort Valley State and the university did not leverage its resources to prevent the decline of the surrounding neighborhood. Reversing this history of separation means connecting Fort Valley State University to the surrounding community and the City of Fort Valley. Together, these groups can address the needs of the economically depressed neighborhoods of Fort Valley in ways that benefit city residents and the University. Keys to implementing this vision are the development of a joint plan between the city, residents, and University to address the social needs of the community; addressing the housing needs of residents, students, faculty, and staff through mixed income housing; creating an economic center in the district to serve residents and students; and physically improving connections from Fort Valley State University to downtown and the northern neighborhoods.



**Historical divisions**



**Depressed neighborhoods**



**Needs of students, faculty & staff**

## 2. General Description of District

The boundaries of the University District include the Norfolk Southern Railroad to the west, the Fort Valley city limits to the south, Martin Luther King



Boulevard to the east, and the area just north of Spruce Street, up to the Central District boundary, to the north.

### **Notable places**

The dominant facility in this district is Fort Valley State University. The Fort Valley High and Industrial School was founded by leading white and black citizens and was chartered in 1895. The school remained the Fort Valley High and Industrial School until 1935, when it consolidated with the State Teachers and Agricultural College of Forsyth. At this time, the school was renamed Fort Valley State College. It became Fort Valley State University in June of 1996. In 2000, Fort Valley State University was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district in the fields of architecture and black education. The historic district includes 160 acres and eleven buildings.<sup>1</sup>



**University  
is  
dominant  
facility**

Huntington Hall is one of Fort Valley State University's earliest buildings still in existence today. According to the master plan, the University plans on replacing Huntington Hall with a parking lot. The University should reconsider this move, as Huntington Hall could be considered a heritage site within the University District.

The Ganoville neighborhood is located just west of Fort Valley State University. This neighborhood was established over eighty years ago and is a link to the past of Fort Valley. Ganoville is like many other neighborhoods in many other small towns. Migrants settling in Fort Valley to work in the booming peach industry established the neighborhood.



**Ganoville  
neighbor-  
hood**

### **Designated brownfield sites**

The University district includes two designated brownfield sites. They include:

- Old College Inn (214/216 Pear Street) and
- University Villas (820 State University Drive).

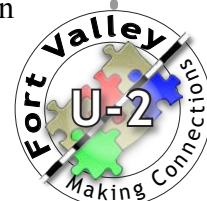
## **3. Fort Valley State University: History and Relations with the City<sup>2</sup>**

In 1895, fifteen black men and three white men founded Fort Valley State University as Fort Valley High and Industrial School (FVHI). The University was founded after the industrial school models of Hampton and Tuskegee with an educational philosophy of vocational training for blacks.



**Founded  
as an  
industrial  
school**

When the institution was founded, local whites feared black controlled education and believed there was not enough emphasis on industrial trades. The tension between the desires of the white community and the perceived academic intentions of the institution led to the replacement of the first principal in 1904, and the removal of all the black trustees and teachers who did not support a vocational curriculum.



| year | evolution   |
|------|---|
| 1895 | Fort Valley High and Industrial School<br>Boarding and local grammar school |
| 1901 | Boarding grammar school   |
| 1913 | Grammar, high and industrial school   |
| 1928 | Junior college  |
| 1932 | Fort Valley Normal and Industrial School                                    |
| 1939 | Fort Valley State College, four-year unit of University System of Georgia   |
| 1946 | Master's programs   |
| 1993 | Fort Valley State University, regional university status                    |

**Table U-1:** Evolution of Fort Valley State University as an educational institution. (Source: Studio, based on various sources.)

After the regime change at Fort Valley State University, the relationship between the school and the community appears to have become more amicable. The second principal of Fort Valley State University, Henry Hunt Jr., and his wife, Florence Hunt, were committed to the social and economic uplifting of the black community. Florence Hunt was involved with meeting the health needs of the local community and the school infirmary bearing her name served residents and students, white and black, until 1953 when a hospital was built.

The amicable relationship between university and community subsided with the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the University's growing academic aspirations. The tension culminated in the 1970s. In the 1972 Fort Valley city elections, six black candidates challenged eleven whites for positions. One of these black candidates defeated the white candidates for a position on the Utilities Commission. The local newspaper attributed the victory to the students of Fort Valley State. Three other blacks had runoffs with white opponents and received the majority of the regular votes, but lost when the absentee votes were counted.

In the same year, two faculty members and eleven community members sued to desegregate the college. The plaintiffs wanted to "eliminate the racial identity of Fort Valley State College, as a Negro College." They argued the school should be eighty-five percent black, the percent of whites in the total University System of Georgia's colleges and universities. During the same time period, some claim local and state white newspapers tried to damage the college's public image.<sup>3</sup>

However, the University was intent on improving itself. In the 1990s, the school's focus became expanding its prestige - statewide and nationally. The school's president spoke about the lack of social activities as a disadvantage of a small town and the importance of making the university the center of students' social lives. As an answer to this, the school applied for and received a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant to develop a 'student village' along State University Drive.

Improvements continue today. Currently, the university is restoring a downtown building for use as a new University Club. According to the 10-year and 10+



**Relations  
with city  
become  
tense**



**Intent to  
desegre-  
gate**





year campus master plans, development of more student housing is planned.

The recent decision to locate the University Club downtown represents an effort to connect the school and community. Yet, there is still much that the town can do to accommodate and serve the students resulting in a mutually beneficial social and economic relationship.

### **Fort Valley State University today**

Presently, the University is home to over 3,000 students; ninety-four percent of which are African American. One-third of the students live on campus (in six residence halls), and eighty-five percent attend classes full time. The University offers bachelor's degrees in over fifty majors including education, business administration and agriculture and master's degrees in eight majors including animal science, education and counseling. The University also offers courses at off campus sites in Macon, Warner Robbins, Cochran, and Dublin.<sup>4</sup>

### **Fort Valley State University research – agricultural biotechnology<sup>5</sup>**

Since its inception, a major portion of Fort Valley State University's research has been in the area of agricultural biotechnology. Current research funded at Fort Valley State University is focused on horticulture and phytoremediation, which have the potential to initiate commercial production. Fort Valley's strong agricultural base enables researchers to work closely with the local producers of peaches, pecans, cotton, and peanuts. Researchers are constantly working toward advancement including heartier varieties that are drought and disease resistant and extension of lifespan.



**Figure U-2:** Fort Valley State University's Agricultural Research Station. (Source: Studio.)

Advancement is also occurring in the field of phytoremediation. Phytoremediation consists of plantings that can absorb or tolerate soils contaminated with toxins such as lead, arsenic, nickel, and cobalt. With the presence of the Woolfolk superfund site and other brownfield sites, Fort Valley is a virtual laboratory for research. Currently, Fort Valley State University has two professors working on such research.

Dr. Seema Dhir has received one patent for such a plant and is working on the development of others. Another leader in the field of phytoremediation is Dr.

 **University Club downtown**

 **3,000 students, 94% African American**

 **Strengths in biotech**

 **Phytoremediation**



Sarwin Dhir. He has recently secured funding from the US Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency for a taxonomy study of contaminated sites. The study would work to identify what types of plants are currently tolerating contaminated soils. Other research under consideration includes the testing of existing plants to determine their phytoremediation abilities.

Fort Valley and Fort Valley State University have the resources to support such studies. Continuing research could lead to commercialization of Agricultural Biotechnology for small start-up companies and existing agricultural firms. Large firms have indicated interest in the research conducted by Fort Valley State University faculty. However, siting of industry within this locale would most likely come from new firms or subsidiaries of larger companies concentrating on such research.

### **Impact of Fort Valley State University on the City of Fort Valley**

As the railroads ceased to be America's major source of transportation, many small cities, such as Fort Valley, became shadows of their former selves. Through all this change, Fort Valley State University remained a stable and dominant facility in the city. The University is, and has always been, a valuable ally to the City of Fort Valley. Each year, Fort Valley State University introduces new consumers into the Fort Valley economy with its freshman class, transfers, and first year graduate students. In addition to this, the loyalty of students and a strong sports program bring alumni back each year. Fort Valley State University is an unwavering and stable employer in the community, as well as a strong historical and cultural presence. Its research achievements bring recognition not only to the University, but to the city as well.

As one of the largest and most stable employers in Fort Valley, the university can have a tremendous impact on the surrounding community. During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, college president, Dr. Waldo William Emerson Blanchet, urged the students to "make what we have available to the community. The city of Fort Valley, although relatively small, sustains most of the social ills of any other population."<sup>6</sup> He urged students to participate in the politics of Fort Valley and Peach County. In the 1970s, he renewed his call and became more adamant about the college's role in the community.<sup>7</sup> The needs of the residents of Fort Valley that Dr. Blanchet recognized over 30 years ago still exist today.

Communities around the country are discovering that university partnerships are a valuable tool for redevelopment that benefits residents, students, faculty, and staff. University and community partnerships are involved in housing development, job training, homeowner education, tutoring, and many other activities designed to address the socioeconomic needs of local residents. Fort Valley State University has more capacity and resources available to address the needs of the surrounding community than any other institution in Fort Valley. To its credit, Fort Valley State University and its Office of Community Development have obtained grants and are actively involved with these issues. However, by expanding the University's role in the community and leveraging the curriculum, students, research, and funding to confront the socioeconomic problems in Fort Valley, the University could be the catalyst for a redevelopment process that benefits both city residents and the university community.



**Commercialization of biotech**



**University an asset for Fort Valley**



**Large and stable employer**



**University partnerships a valuable tool**



### **Current situation of the University District**

The median household income in Fort Valley is under \$20,000; per capita income is under \$11,000; twenty percent of the labor force is unemployed; and thirty-seven percent of the population lives below the poverty level.<sup>8</sup> The effect of these troubling economic indicators is evident in the declining quality of life in the neighborhoods surrounding Fort Valley State University. The decline in employment and income raises concerns about housing adequacy and criminal activity in these distressed neighborhoods. The community's social needs affect the University as well as the city. The poor quality of off-campus housing and incidences of crime against students impairs Fort Valley State University's ability to attract faculty, staff and students.



**Troubling economic indicators**

There are three major issues that currently exist in the University District.

The first is adequate housing stock for the faculty, students, and the community as a whole. There is a severe lack of adequate and affordable housing in Fort Valley. The majority of homes in the area are run down and in need of repair. The current housing stock does not meet the needs or desires of most faculty and students nor other prospective residents of the community. Thus, many employed within the city limits of Fort Valley choose to live elsewhere in the county or in other nearby counties. Many of the houses are structurally sound but are in need of updates in order to promote the makings of an attractive mixed income community.



**Lack of adequate and affordable housing**

The second issue is general connections between the University, the surrounding community, and the city. A viable transportation link is needed from the University District to the other points in the City of Fort Valley. In addition, upgrading the aesthetics of the area through streetscapes and an introduction of a gateway can enhance the connection between the University, the surrounding community, and the city.



**Lack of connections to rest of town**

The third issue is the lack of a distinct commercial node. There is a shortage of businesses that meet student, faculty, and resident retail and service needs. While some land use changes may need to be made, creation of a commercial node would help to increase the economic vitality of the area as well as enhance the quality of life.



**Lack of local retail**

## **4. District projects**

### ***Community Improvement Projects:***

#### **4.1 University District redevelopment strategy (Project U1)**

In Fort Valley, a redevelopment strategy, developed and adopted by the city and the University, is necessary to address the social needs of residents in these communities. The redevelopment strategy will guide the efforts of the city, university, and other entities involved in helping the community by ensuring that all these groups are working towards the same goals. The creation of a redevelopment strategy





must be a collaborative work of all stakeholders, which include, but are not limited to, city and university officials, residents, and local business leaders. Ultimately these stakeholders will determine the goals of the redevelopment strategy.

Ideologically, this strategy is important to ensure coherence in redevelopment efforts, but practically, it will greatly enhance the ability to receive funding. Government programs and private foundations like to know that a project they fund conforms to a larger strategy that involves collaboration between multiple groups. A joint redevelopment strategy will do just that.

Development of a community redevelopment strategy also entails the need for an implementation plan. This may necessitate creating groups or organizations to perform functions no one currently does. Implementation is discussed in Project U2.


 **Inclusion of all stakeholders**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U1</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>University District redevelopment strategy</b>                                  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Administrative   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Very High  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | < 1 year   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | High   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private<br>Non-profit  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Create redevelopment strategy to address community issues                          |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Strategy will provide a framework to address critical issues within the community. |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | U2   |

**Table U-2:** Summary matrix for the University district redevelopment strategy project. (Source: Studio.)

## 4.2 Community-based partnership (Project U2)

Fort Valley State University, like many other institutions of higher learning in this country, is located in a neighborhood that has inadequate housing, high rates of unemployment and poverty along with growing levels of crime and drugs. Even some of the most prestigious American universities like Yale, Penn and Notre Dame, currently face some of these same challenges and difficulties. In response to these problems and other social maladies, several of these universities, with support from local community groups, have found it beneficial and necessary to work together to revitalize their neighborhoods. This collaborative effort is a key tool in improving the standard of living for residents, students, and faculty alike.

 **Surrounding neighborhood is economically depressed**



Given the difficulties and hurdles associated with community development and revitalization, many of these groups have formed partnerships to tackle the needs of economically depressed neighborhoods. These community-based partnerships are often comprised of key stakeholders from the community, neighboring university, and private and public sector entities. Collectively, these community-based groups can be and often are referred to as Community Development Corporations or CDCs.

It is important to note that concerned citizens and leaders of Fort Valley do not necessarily have to create an entirely new separate CDC organization to handle the issues facing the Fort Valley community. The community currently has several programs and entities already in place that deal with many of Fort Valley's housing and development concerns. Collectively, and with the guidance of an overall redevelopment strategy, these groups are more than capable of revitalizing the Fort Valley community. It is important that each of these separate entities is organized in a manner that will allow them to function as a unified entity. This will allow the groups to operate in an efficient manner, maximizing all available resources. Emphasis on developing a strong, unified relationship, and believing in an overall vision for redevelopment is the key to developing a successful partnership.

### **An overview of community-based partnerships**

Community development is a process of improving low and moderate-income neighborhoods for the benefit of, and under the direction of, the residents of that neighborhood. "Community" includes an existing network of personal and institutional connections and relationships by which residents develop relationships, a common sense of identification, and support of and from others in their neighborhood.

A community-based partnership is essentially an organization or entity that is created by interested community stakeholders to plan and carry out a variety of community development activities. These activities are usually designed to improve housing, increase employment and income, and combating crime and other social problems, while empowering residents. The partnerships are designed to strengthen the human, organizational, economic and physical capacity of the neighborhood and its residents. This capacity includes individual skills, knowledge, health and overall well being.<sup>9</sup>

By 1995, well over 2,000 community-based partnerships were operating in the United States. Data shows that ninety-five percent of cities with 100,000 or more residents have one or more partnerships in operation.<sup>10</sup> These entities are not restricted to large cities; however, as many smaller rural areas across the country have recognized the benefits of establishing a local group to address the needs of their respective communities. Despite the large number of these active groups, all share common principles including:

- Comprehensive visions for community renewal by enlisting the support of other organizations and institutions in collective solutions;
- A focus on building and investing in a community's assets-both physical and human; and
- Empowerment of neighborhood residents by developing their skills and leadership, and by offering opportunities for participation in community self-determination.



**No need  
for new  
organiza-  
tion**



**What is a  
community-  
based part-  
nership?**



**Common  
principles**



### **Benefits of establishing a community-based partnership**

Smaller, economically depressed, rural communities often lack the people, skills and money to support schools, libraries, community centers, child development centers and public transportation that poor families need to improve their lives. Without these essential building blocks, residents in distressed rural communities have difficulty breaking free from the cycle of poverty.



**Difficulty  
in breaking  
the cycle of  
poverty**

In smaller, rural communities like Fort Valley, it is especially important for multiple groups and various community leaders to work together to rebuild their neighborhoods. Many of these groups continually face budget cutbacks leaving each group with fewer resources to improve their neighborhoods. In a period of scarce resources, a strong, unified, collaborative effort is essential to mobilize and stretch available means for community redevelopment. A community based partnership could benefit the Fort Valley area in various ways including; the rehabilitation of existing housing stock, the construction of new affordable infill housing, revitalization of commercial facilities, beautification of neighborhoods, and educational and mentoring programs for community youth.

A community-based entity could be used to facilitate the rehabilitation of these homes in neighborhoods surrounding Fort Valley State University and throughout the City of Fort Valley. In addition to general capital improvements to address blighted property, the organization could take on projects which include, but are not limited to, efforts to improve environmental health by removing lead paint or other health hazards, trash removal and general property maintenance, and conservation efforts to weatherize or change heating, water, or sewer systems.



**Rehabili-  
tation of  
housing**

### **Educational and recreational programs for community youth**

A strong and successful public school system is one of the most important tools to effectively revitalize an impoverished community. Successful school systems are attractive to households that seek new housing, especially those households with children. In addition to providing a quality education for students, strong school systems contribute to the appreciation of homes located within and surrounding the district.

Improving the test scores from schools in Fort Valley should continue to remain a top priority for Fort Valley community leaders. Besides the obvious benefit to students, an improvement in these statistics will improve Fort Valley's attractiveness to outsiders. A strong public school system will provide substantial benefits toward community revitalization efforts.



**Better test  
scores a  
priority**

In addition to basic physical and structural community rehabilitation efforts, community-based partnerships have been successful in providing technical and tutoring assistance to the youth of the communities in which they serve. In many cases, students and faculty of universities have taken the lead in this process.

### **Mentor and leadership services for community youth**

Many of the youth in economically depressed communities and neighborhoods





suffer from high rates of functional illiteracy, substance abuse and crime. This phenomenon is often viewed as a problem typical of large inner city urban areas, but small rural cities like Fort Valley find themselves combating these same issues. Many of these problems stem from the fact that many young people often do not have enough caring adult role models to guide and support them. One of the most effective ways to help young people is through mentoring.

According to a research study from Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, young people who meet regularly with mentors are:<sup>11</sup>

- Twenty-seven percent less likely to begin drinking alcohol;
- Thirty-three percent less likely to hit someone;
- Forty-six percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs; and
- Fifty-two percent less likely to skip school.

A mentoring program sponsored or run by a community-based partnership could provide substantial benefits to the children and youth of Fort Valley. Residents, business leaders and Fort Valley State University faculty and students are obvious leaders for such a program. In addition, leaders of the city's religious community could provide additional mentoring support by providing programs that are geared towards establishing healthy relationships between parents and their children

#### **Fort Valley State University: A leading role**

“Very often universities are the greatest assets in their area. But for too long they have been isolated from the surrounding community. We are looking at how you open the gates of the university to literally bring in the community.”<sup>12</sup>

Fort Valley State University is in a unique position to take a leading role in the creation and implementation of a Fort Valley community outreach partnership. The university's access to resources, which include technology, funding sources and a significant wealth of knowledge from students, faculty and staff, help to position the university for a strong leadership stance.

Given the recent and significant federal cutbacks in funding for educational purposes, attracting and retaining quality students, administration and faculty has become a top priority for many universities across the country. Universities located in amenity rich communities often attract and retain some of the very best students and faculty.

Institutions now recognize the importance of contributing to the development of a strong, vibrant community as a key tool in attracting and retaining the very best students and faculty. The image and attraction of institutions is closely connected to the appearance, conditions, and safety of the larger community in which they are embedded.

Fort Valley State University students and faculty members can receive substantial benefits from working within the community on redevelopment efforts. An established link between the academic curriculum on campus and



#### **Benefits of mentoring**



#### **University can take leading role**



redevelopment efforts off campus can provide great opportunities for students and faculty to study real world issues. The combination of classroom instruction and hands on experience from the outside world helps to mold a student into a well-rounded citizen. In addition, from the institutional point of view, Fort Valley State University can teach a valuable moral lesson to its students by actively participating in community redevelopment efforts.

Fort Valley State University is inextricably intertwined with Ganoville and other distressed neighborhoods that surround the campus. The University cannot simply relocate to another neighborhood that is more safe, cleaner and vibrant just because current conditions continue to decline in surrounding neighborhoods. This fact only emphasizes the importance and need for Fort Valley State University to build and maintain community relationships and partnerships. Working together, Fort Valley State University and Fort Valley community leaders can tackle the issues plaguing the Fort Valley community.



**Issues of the community are issues of the university**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U2</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Community-based partnership</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Administrative  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | High  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | < 1 year  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Very high   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private<br>Non-profit   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Create partnership to address community issues                                    |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Creates a governing body to oversee redevelopment effort throughout the community |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | U2a   |

*Table U-3: Summary matrix for the community-based partnership project. (Source: Studio.)*

### 4.3 Seek HBCU/CDBG funds<sup>13</sup> (Project U2a)

The City of Fort Valley and Fort Valley State University should combine powers in order to seek Federal funds from HUD to create a much needed community based partnership (or enhance a current program). Currently, HUD offers a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Program that awards grants to HBCUs to address community development needs in their localities.

In the past, Fort Valley State University has applied for and won grant money from the HBCU program. To date, Fort Valley State University has received



two grants. The first was for \$490,000, with which Fort Valley State University made landscaping improvements to the surrounding areas. The second was for \$500,000. The main purpose of this grant was the creation of a Public Service Center, which provides general services to the community for economic uplift. The center is located in the Evans Building and provides technical assistance, loans for business startups and expansions, and loans for at risk companies. In addition to this Public Service Center, the grant money was also used to create a Rural Business Outreach Program. This program created an incubator downtown and provides technical assistance. Currently, Fort Valley State University continues to apply for grant funding in this capacity.



**Previously  
received  
grants**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U2a</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Seek HBCU/CDBG funds</b>                         |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Administrative                                      |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Low   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Low   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Very high   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very high   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | < 1 year  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Very high   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | No Funding  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Seek HBCU/CDBG Funds                                |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Potential funding source for redevelopment strategy |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

*Table U-4: Summary matrix for the project of seeking HBCU/CDBG grants. (Source: Studio.)*

## 4.4 Increase of housing opportunities (Project U3)

There is a severe lack of quality affordable housing in Fort Valley. The two most common measures of housing problems are overcrowding and affordability. Over eight percent of the housing units in Fort Valley are overcrowded and almost thirty-four percent of all households in Fort Valley pay over thirty percent of their income for housing. This includes twenty-three percent of all homeowners and forty-five percent of all renters.<sup>14</sup> In the neighborhood surrounding Fort Valley State University, residents have difficulty leasing housing units because landlords prefer student tenants.



**Over-  
crowded  
and unaf-  
fordable  
housing**

Approximately one-third of the Fort Valley State University student body resides within the scattered apartments and single-family houses that surround the university. Students seek out these residences for a variety of reasons including the need to find less expensive housing and a general desire to reside off campus. Unfortunately for these students, the selection of good quality housing in Fort Valley is quite limited. Many of these individuals find themselves living in substandard housing conditions, which limits their ability to learn in the best possible environment. In addition, neighborhoods with dilapidated housing units often



**1/3 of stu-  
dents live  
nearby**





attract crime and other unwanted activities, which threaten the safety of students, university employees and other residents. The abundance of vacant apartments (over fifty percent) at University Villas may be attributed to these acts of crime and other unwanted activities.

University staff members are concerned about the quality of the off-campus housing that students are leasing primarily due to issues related to basic health and safety. It has been reported that several Fort Valley State University students have recently been victims of assault, burglary and other crimes while residing in these residential units surrounding the university.

### **Housing strategies in the university district**

One of the primary goals of the University District redevelopment strategy must be the expansion of housing opportunities for residents across all income levels. This would include housing opportunities for low to high-income residents, students, faculty and staff. The goal of the housing strategy is to provide opportunities for all these groups within the same neighborhood, so that the benefits of redevelopment are available to all. This goal may be achieved through the preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing and construction of new in-fill housing. In addition, the housing strategy should also focus upon educating the community in various areas involving home ownership.



**Housing opportunities for all income groups**

### **Existing housing stock rehabilitation**



**Figure U-3:** Photos of housing types in the area. (Source: Studio.)

Citizens of Fort Valley and Fort Valley State University students living off campus in single-family rental housing believe that housing conditions in Fort Valley are unsatisfactory. According to recent survey results, nearly sixty-one percent of Fort Valley State University students (out of a total sample group of 1,176) rated the housing situation in Fort Valley as poor. Thirty-nine percent, or 455, of these students rated housing conditions fair, while only eight students rated housing conditions as good.



An inventory assessment revealed that many of the single-family residential units in Ganoville and in the neighborhoods surrounding Fort Valley State University are in substantial need of physical repairs and/or improvements. Some of these homes only need cosmetic changes such as a simple coating of new paint, while others will require more extensive structural improvements. Some of these dilapidated units will probably need to be demolished, as they are currently unsuitable structures for residential use.



**SF units in Ganoville in need of repair**

The creation of historic districts in Ganoville and Vineville allows these neighborhoods to access funds designated for preservation and restoration of historic housing (for more information refer to Project U7). In addition to federal and state funds, the City of Fort Valley should obtain money for housing rehabilitation. Two commonly used sources include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds from the HUD.



**Other funding sources**

Community Development Block Grants provide metropolitan cities and urban counties with annual direct grants that can be used to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities, and/or improve community facilities and services, principally to benefit low- and moderate-income persons.<sup>15</sup>

The HOME Investment Partnership Program helps to expand the supply of decent, affordable housing for low and very low-income families by providing grants to states and local governments referred to as participating jurisdictions. Participating jurisdictions use HOME grants to fund housing programs that meet local needs and priorities.<sup>16</sup>

While historic preservation and revolving loan pools are appealing to owner occupants, fifty-four percent of households in Fort Valley are renters. There needs to be an incentive for landlords to rehabilitate their properties, and given the affordability crisis amongst renters in Fort Valley, these tenants need to be protected from rent increases that would exacerbate affordability problems. Enforcement of the housing code is the best way to force landlords to rehabilitate their properties.



**Incentives to landlords needed**

Rental property owners can finance repairs themselves, borrow money from the city, or risk foreclosure. If the owner borrows money from the city, the city should restrict rent increases, so that the rental affordability crisis in Fort Valley does not grow. If the city does acquire the property, they can either rehabilitate the property themselves or sell the property, at a low cost, to a low-income household or non-profit organization that agrees to renovate the property. If the building is in such poor condition that it needs to be demolished, as many vacant buildings in Fort Valley are, the cost of demolition can be levied against the property owner.

Another strategy for housing rehabilitation involves the university itself acquiring and redeveloping properties; many universities have successfully implemented this strategy across the country. Rehabilitated properties can be sold or leased to low-income community residents or university faculty and staff. Rehabilitated housing can also be used as off-campus student housing.



Property owners of single-family homes, and multi-family rental properties that need renovations or improvements, may seek out various loans from the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service (USDA—RHS). Several of these are listed below:

- Section 504 Home Improvement and Repair Loan and Grant program offers loans and grants for renovations and to make a home accessible for people with disabilities. Homeowners aged sixty-two years and older are eligible for this assistance. Other low-income families may receive loans through this program at a one percent interest rate. USDA made 277 loans through the Section 504 program in Georgia. The FY 2001 national appropriation was \$32.4 million.
- Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Loan provides direct loans to developers of affordable rural multi-family housing. Interest rates may be subsidized to as low as 1%. Funds can be used to construct new rental housing complexes or to repair and rehabilitate existing units. The FY2001 national appropriation was \$114.3 million. As of 1998, there have been over 17,000 units financed with Section 515 loans in Georgia.
- Section 533 Housing Preservation Grant makes grants to nonprofits and local governments to renovate existing low-income multi-family rental units. Funds may also be used to help individuals make repairs to private homes. Approximately \$5.5 million was available nationally during FY2000.



## USDA loans

### New affordable construction

In addition to rehabilitation of existing stock, Fort Valley redevelopment leaders need to facilitate the construction of new, quality affordable housing. Because Fort Valley is a small market and affordable housing typically generates lower profit margins, developers have little incentives to build this type of housing in the area.

Attracting affordable housing development in Fort Valley will be difficult because the city lacks market based development opportunities. Developers have difficulty finding market opportunities in older, low-income neighborhoods primarily due to the risks associated with that type of development. Because of the risks involved, for profit developers will not develop in Fort Valley's economically distressed neighborhoods without receiving incentives. The basic issue of financial feasibility currently prevents the private sector from building and developing in economically distressed neighborhoods like those surrounding Fort Valley State University. This is attributed to the fact that the projected cost of a development usually exceeds the appraised value of the project once it's completed.



## Difficulties in build-ing new affordable housing

Some barriers to development are attributed to the conservative nature of lending institutions. Because banks are in the business to minimize risk on returns, proposed projects with estimated costs that exceed appraised values do not get approved for obvious reasons. In addition, financial institutions will not participate and lend capital for a development that appears to be risky to them.

Fort Valley has numerous hurdles in the way, which discourages market rate housing development. In order to effectively confront this housing issue,





the University District redevelopment strategy must be focused on developing a partnership between the local government, non-profit organizations and the residential development community. The redevelopment strategy will need to focus on reducing or removing disincentives for development while maintaining a community-based vision for redevelopment.

Financing the construction of new affordable housing in Fort Valley will require creative financing packages that utilize several layers of funding sources. In addition to CDBG and Home funds, Fort Valley redevelopment leaders may use funding from the USDA Rural Housing program. Some of these funding options are listed below.

- Section 514 Farm Labor Housing makes low-interest loan and grants available to public and nonprofit entities (or farmers) for the construction of farm labor housing. Funds may be used to buy, build, improve, or repair housing for farm laborers. The FY2001 national appropriation was \$28.5 million
- Section 523 & 524 Rural Housing Site Loans offer loans for the purchase and development of affordable housing sites in rural areas for low and moderate-income families. Eligible organizations include nonprofits and public bodies. The FY2001 national appropriation was \$39.1 million.
- Section 538 Rural Rental Housing Guaranteed Loan Program funds the construction of multi-family housing for low-income families. USDA guarantees up to ninety percent of the amount of a loan from a private lender to a housing developer. The program has approximately \$100 million available nationally.

### **Market rate housing**

Fort Valley should provide market rate housing for the executives, managers and higher wage-earning members of the community. The city currently has a severe shortage of suitable housing options for this portion of the labor force. According to the US Census, in the year 2000, ninety-two percent of Fort Valley's housing stock was valued under \$100,000.<sup>17</sup> Because of the shortage of moderate and higher-end housing, most of these individuals are forced to look for housing in neighboring communities and counties. This is a problem for Fort Valley because the city is allowing potential taxable income to leak away from the city

The lack of market rate housing could possibly hinder Fort Valley's economic development future. For example, most companies looking to expand or relocate search for communities that can provide and support a broad range of employees. The most attractive communities are able to provide and support "life-cycle" housing. Communities with life cycle housing contain a wide variety of housing options for individuals of different income scales, ages and disabilities.

Fort Valley redevelopment leaders can take several steps to position the community to attract new affordable and market rate housing. Some of these steps are listed below.

- *Establish an efficient development system.* University District redevelopment leaders need to have an understanding of the housing development process to effectively push the redevelopment initiative. In addition, a community



**Options  
to finance  
new  
housing**



**Market  
rate hous-  
ing for  
the better  
earning**



**Strategies  
to attract  
housing**



needs assessment and market analysis should be undertaken to understand the nature of the community's housing demand. An analysis of these studies should be able to determine who wants the housing to be built or rehabilitated and if the individuals are willing and able to pay associated development costs.

- *Improve land accessibility.* Accessibility to developable parcels is a key factor in attracting market rate housing to Fort Valley. Land parcels should be assembled for developers and provided with clear titles and adequate infrastructure. Land could be collected and assembled from a variety of sources including land foreclosed due to tax delinquency, donations from local citizens, churches, or public schools. Community redevelopment leaders should set up a land inventory record to aid in assembling available developable parcels. A permanent record about the sites should contain items including the name of the owner, parcel's appraised value, tax assessment, parcel size, sale price and topography just to name a few. A written or computerized inventory could be set up with relative ease. Fort Valley State University students could create a "clickable" online system with aerial photographs that highlight and outlining parcels available for development.
- *Improve city infrastructure.* Public water and sewer systems are expensive to develop, to increase capacity, and to maintain. Most rural communities have relied on USDA for funding water and sewer improvements, but budget cutbacks have reduced the amount of monies awarded to communities. Small governments and communities like Fort Valley often have difficulty funding public utilities, however, these systems are necessary if market rate housing, or any other type of housing is to be developed in Fort Valley. Impact, hook-up and tap fees charged by local governments for new developments are becoming a major cost impediment for many

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U3</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Increase of housing opportunities</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 6 - 10 years  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Low   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | HUD<br>US Department of Agriculture Rural Housing Program (USDA-RHS)<br>Fannie Mae Foundation |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Increase housing opportunities for entire community   |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Improves Fort Valley's economic vitality by providing housing opportunities for all residents |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | U1  |

**Table U-5:** Summary matrix for the increase of housing opportunities project. (Source: Studio.)



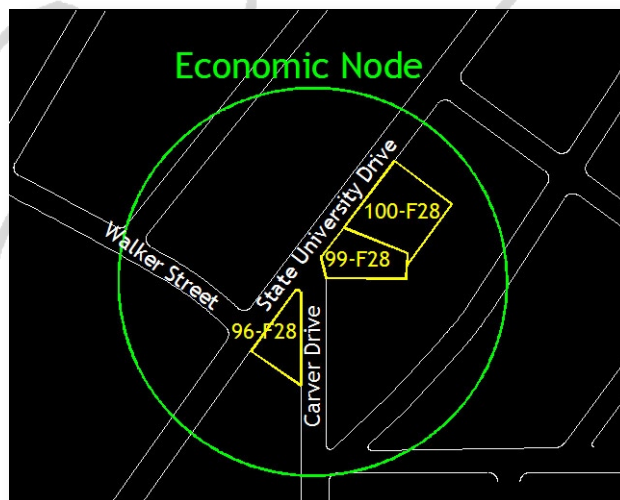
housing initiatives across the nation. Because of the potential cost impediment, Fort Valley government officials must find a way to assist with infrastructure related costs for water and sewer. Some of these costs may include connection fees, utility hookups and sidewalk requirements.

## 4.5 Economic node at Carver Drive & State University Drive (Project U4)

The University district is in desperate need of a viable commercial/economic node. There is a shortage of businesses that meet student, faculty, and resident retail and service needs. However, there is space available for such businesses. There are several vacant lots located within close proximity to one another that could be acquired and developed into viable businesses that serve the community as a whole.



**Lack of  
local-  
serving  
businesses**



*Figure U-4: Location of parcels that would primarily be affected by the economic node project. (Source: Studio.)*

Results of a recent survey given to Fort Valley State University students revealed that many students feel Fort Valley lacks suitable places for them to eat, shop, and find basic entertainment. It is important for Fort Valley residents and students and staff of Fort Valley State University to have conveniently located services and business throughout the community. As it currently stands, many students and local residents feel the need to travel outside of the city limits to adjacent communities like Byron, Perry, and Macon to acquire necessary goods and services. The apparent lack of services in Fort Valley impacts the community in a negative way and makes the community less attractive for prospective students of Fort Valley State University and residents of Fort Valley.



**Lack of  
services  
for stu-  
dents, too**

One potential way of implementing this commercial/economic node would be through the community-based partnership. By acquiring the vacant parcels and developing small businesses based on the needs of the surrounding community, the community-based partnership could begin the economic revitalization the area so desperately needs. It should be noted that the zoning in this area would most likely need to be changed in order to implement this type of development.





We recognize that Fort Valley is a small retail market, thus some goods and services could not realistically be supplied within the community. However, several other types of services such as a coffee shop, sandwich shop, theater or a small bowling alley could be supplied.



**What is needed?**

The main space of interest is located at the intersection of Carver Street and State University Drive.



**Figure U-5:** Photo of the intersection as it looks today. (Source: Studio.)



**Figure U-6:** Rendering of the same location after the inclusion of neighborhood commercial areas, that would also serve the student population. (Source: Studio.)

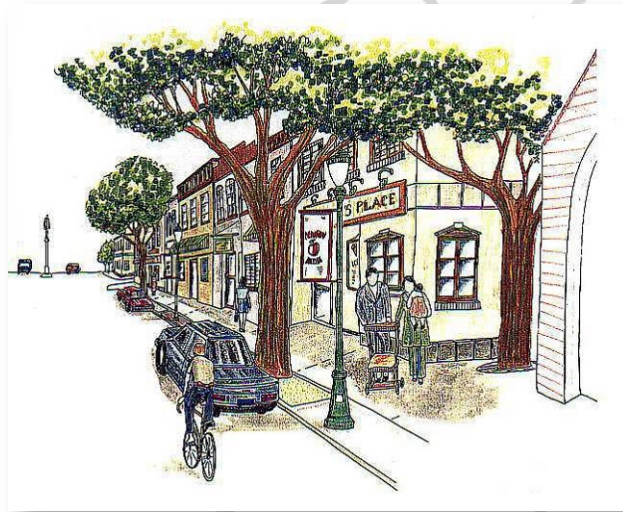
Above, the first picture is the intersection as it is today. The picture below it is what the intersection could be. Architecture of existing buildings within town was duplicated in order to show that any development should have a contiguous feeling.

In order to increase the aesthetics of the area, streetscape (refer to Project U5) should be considered. Below is a sketch of what could be done. In addition to safety, plantings and pedestrian lighting are also important to maintain a residential feel.



**Streetscape is also needed**





**Figure U-7:** Streetscape elements such as planting strips, on-street parking and street lighting make a street more pedestrian-friendly.

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U4</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Economic node @ Carver &amp; State Univ. Dr.</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High  |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Low   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | This project would have to be undertaken by a private developer                               |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Private   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Create Incentives to attract developers   |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Provides much needed services for University District and stimulates the surrounding economy. |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

**Table U-6:** Summary matrix for the economic node project. (Source: Studio.)

## 4.6 Street improvements (Project U5)

The main goal of this study is to connect the different communities within the City of Fort Valley. The citywide physical manifestation of this goal is the main thoroughfare proposed for State University Drive, Railroad St. and Commercial Heights. Within the University District street improvements represent the major infrastructure improvements that physically and figuratively strengthen connections within this district as well as between this district and the others. Not only will the street improvements strengthen connections, but they also help create better



**Major infrastructure projects**





public spaces and give the district a unique identity.

Improvements should focus on State University Drive, Carver Drive, Samuel Jones Street, and the Knoxville corridor (Knoxville Street, Everett Square, Green Street, and Walker Street.). These improvements include bike lanes, which are included in the overall bike plan previously discussed in Project G1.

State University Drive is the most important street in the district, and while it is one of the few streets in Fort Valley with sidewalks, planting strips and on street parking, street improvements will reinforce the importance of this connection between Fort Valley State University and the City of Fort Valley. The first improvement is to convert the central turn lane into a median, with regular curb cuts, to allow tree planting. Benches and street lamps along the length of the street, but with particular attention to the university area and the proposed economic node will create a pedestrian friendly public space.



**Thorough-  
fares to  
focus on**



**State  
University  
Drive**



**Figure U-8:** Current situation on State University Drive. The central lane is a two-way left-turn lane. (Source: Studio.)

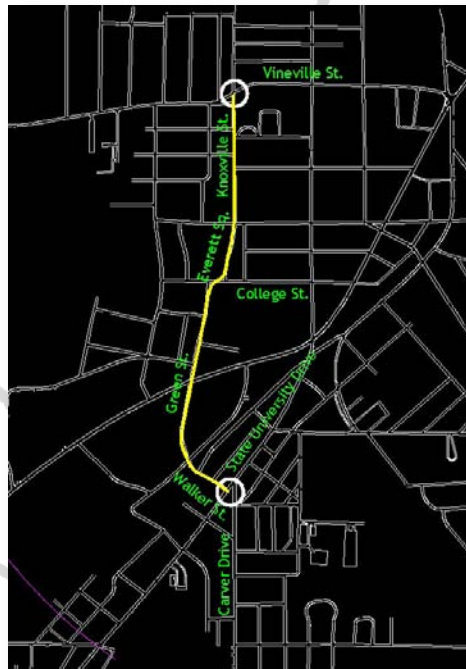


**Figure U-9:** How State University Drive could look like after the introduction of a planted median and pedestrian lighting. (Source: Studio.)





Sidewalks should be added to Carver Drive, allowing pedestrian access to the new economic node and university. Benches and street lamps should also be used to create a better pedestrian environment along this street, with particular attention to the proposed economic node.



**Figure U-10:** Location of the Knoxville corridor; which will allow the university area to reconnect to the northern part of the city. (Source: Studio.)

The corridor created by Knoxville Street, Everett Square, Green Street, and Walker Street connects the existing economic center of the Vineville district and the Everett Square neighborhood with the proposed new economic center at the intersection of State University Drive and Carver Drive (see map above). This route should be improved as a new access route to these neighborhoods and as a new gateway to Fort Valley State



**The  
Knoxville  
corridor**



**Figure U-11:** Walker Street, at the southern end of the proposed corridor as it is now. (Source: Studio.)





**Figure U-12:** Walker Street, as it is proposed. Note the new texturized sidewalks. (Source: Studio.)

University and the surrounding neighborhoods. There is a marked difference in the street space from the north side of the Central of Georgia Railroad to the south side. Road improvements to correct this imbalance include sidewalks and street trees similar to those used on Carver and State University Drives.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) legislation designated funds specifically for pedestrian and bicycle projects. These funds are available through the Georgia Department of Transportation and funds are available under the Federal-aid Highway Program, the Federal Transit Program and the Highway Safety Program.



**Funding  
through  
TEA-21**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U5</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Street Improvements</b>   |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | High   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | TEA 21<br>CMAQ   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Provide sidewalks, streets, trees and furniture.   |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Establishes greater connections between districts<br>Improves public space and pedestrian access within district |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | U1   |

**Table U-7:** Summary matrix for the street improvements project. (Source: Studio.)



For more information on these programs consult the Georgia Department of Transportation website, [www.dot.state.ga.us](http://www.dot.state.ga.us), or contact:

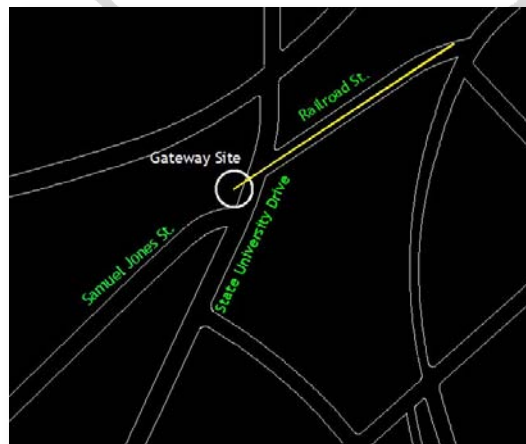
David Wegener  
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Georgia Department of Transportation  
No 2 Capital Square Room 349  
Atlanta GA 30334-1002  
404-657-6692; Fax 404-657-5228  
E-mail: [david.wegener@dot.state.ga.us](mailto:david.wegener@dot.state.ga.us)

## 4.7 State University Drive gateway (Project U6)

State University Drive is the main connection between Fort Valley State University and the City of Fort Valley, a connection that was historically severed by the railroads. This study proposes altering this historical fact by connecting the districts of Fort Valley with a main thoroughfare. Fort Valley State University should create a gateway along this thoroughfare that creates an entrance to the University District and acknowledges the importance of the University to the city's history. In addition, this gateway could play a pivotal role in strengthening the relationship between the city and the University.



**Why a gateway?**



**Figure U-13:** Location of the proposed gateway site. (Source: Studio.)



**Figure U-14:** Rendering of what the gateway could look like. (Source: Studio.)





The proposed new thoroughfare would enter the University District at the intersection of Railroad Street and State University Drive. The property at the intersection of Samuel Jones Street and State University Drive is the natural visual termination for visitors entering along Railroad Street. This property would need to be acquired for the placement of a new gateway. Whatever form the gateway takes; a sign, statue, monument, or other, it should unmistakably announce the importance of the university to the history of this district and the city.



**Location  
of gateway**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U6</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>State University Drive gateway</b>                                      |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | High   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Medium   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Medium   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public<br>Private  |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Fort Valley State University Gateway at Samuel Jones and State Univ. Drive |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Establishes historical importance to FVSU district                         |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | U1   |

*Table U-8: Summary matrix for the State University Drive gateway project. (Source: Studio.)*

## Stepping Stone Projects

The following projects could be called stepping-stones to the creation of a redevelopment strategy. Steps toward strengthening the working relationship between the University and the community would include a reduction in the feeling of separation between the two.

### 4.8 Ganoville historic district (Project U7)

On August 3, 2001, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution printed an editorial about the positive effects of preservation. The editorial stated that Georgia cities such as Americus, Eatonton, Monticello, and Sandersville have turned their focus back to their downtowns and historic districts, and the result has been a remarkable return of businesses and residents of every age group.<sup>18</sup>



**Positive  
effects of  
preservation**

The Ganoville neighborhood is located just west of Fort Valley State University.





**Figure U-15:** Proposed boundaries for the Ganoville historic district. (Source: Studio.)

The City of Fort Valley is recognized as a Certified Local Government (CLG) and has a Historic Preservation Ordinance. Fort Valley's Historic Preservation Commission is part of the planning functions of the city and has the power to recommend specific places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects or works of art for designation by ordinance as historic properties or districts. By recognizing the Ganoville neighborhood as a local historic district, the city can begin to integrate historic preservation into local land-use policies within the neighborhood.<sup>19</sup>

Because the city is a recognized CLG, they are eligible to apply for design assistance and certain grants. Grant applications are automatically sent to the CLG contact within each local government. For more information on grants, contact Cherie Bennett, Grants Coordinator: [cherie\\_bennett@mail.dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:cherie_bennett@mail.dnr.state.ga.us).

The Ganoville neighborhood could also be nominated for listing on the National



**Figure U-16:** Historic shotgun house in Ganoville. (Source: Studio.)



**Fort Valley  
advanced  
in preser-  
vation  
issues**



Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The creation of a nationally recognized Ganoville Historic District would enable property owners to seek funds to renovate and preserve homes located within the district.

Once a property or properties are listed, they are eligible for Federal tax benefits and qualification for Federal assistance for historic preservation. Specific grant programs include: Battlefield Partnership Grants, Historic Preservation Fund, and Save America's Treasures Grants. Tax credits are available through the Federal government for structures rehabilitated for income-producing purposes. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program is a cost-effective community revitalization program that cultivates private sector rehabilitation of historic buildings and promotes economic revitalization. Incentives are available for NRHP listed properties that will be used for income-producing purposes and will be rehabilitated according to standards set by the Secretary of the Interior. For descriptions and detailed listing, please refer to the National Park Service Links to the Past website at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/helpyou.html>.<sup>20</sup>



**Listed properties eligible for economic assistance**

Although no Federal funds are offered, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation is another source for preservation of historic properties. In 1990, the Georgia Trust established the Revolving Fund to provide effective alternatives to demolition or neglect of architecturally and historically significant properties by promoting their rehabilitation and enabling owners of endangered historic properties to connect with buyers who will rehabilitate their properties. The Revolving Fund accomplishes this through property donations or through purchasing options. The properties are nationally marketed to locate buyers who agree to preserve and maintain the structures. Protective covenants are attached to the deeds to ensure that the historic integrity of each property is retained.<sup>21</sup>



**Georgia Trust's 'Revolving Fund'**

In addition, the Georgia Trust has an initiative entitled "Living Places". As part of its response to sprawl, the Georgia Trust created this neighborhood program in October 1998. The goals of the program are to inform, educate, and train neighborhood leaders about techniques and strategies that will strengthen communities. The intent is to provide alternatives to sprawling development patterns using historic preservation



**'Living Places' Program**



**Figure U-17:** A 'Living Places' Initiative neighborhood (Source: Georgia Trust.)





as one of the key tools. The program is aimed at fostering quality rehabilitation and infill redevelopment in historic neighborhoods. The Living Places program combines the principles of historic preservation, smart growth, quality design, and community involvement in developing the technical skills, community consensus and the financial resources necessary to revitalize neighborhoods around the state of Georgia.<sup>22</sup>

The City of Fort Valley has a shortage of suitable low-income housing. The creation of a Ganoville Historic District (whether locally or nationally), would give owners incentive to rehabilitate their properties. In addition, Ganoville could be used as a redevelopment example to other neighborhoods within the University District.

By utilizing the remnants of its past, Fort Valley could create low-income housing, while preserving its history. Due to the lack of adequate housing in Fort Valley, this project could have a high impact on the city.



**Historic  
designation  
an incen-  
tive for  
renovation**

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U7</b>   |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Ganoville historic district</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Administrative  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Low   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Low   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Very high   |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Very high   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | < 1 year  |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | Very high   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | No funding required   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Nominate Ganoville neighborhood as a historic district under National Register of Historic Places         |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Stepping stone project for housing and community redevelopment efforts<br>Will open up sources of funding |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

*Table U-9: Summary matrix for the Ganoville historic district project. (Source: Studio.)*

## 4.9 Reduction of university-community separation (Project U8)

The orientation of Fort Valley State University is inward focused, and provides no clearly visible formal entrance to visitors. While Fort Valley State University cannot redesign their campus to change this, it can change its fences, especially the barbed wire fence on the East side that faces the adjoining community. The fence is a legitimate boundary that demarcates the boundary between city and university; it should not be used as a means to exclude the community. Additionally, by connecting to the community, the university will help address the community problems that it is trying to shield itself from.



**Removal  
of fences a  
first signal**





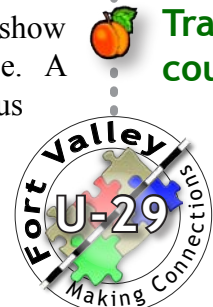
**Figure U-18:** The chain-link fence between the university and the surrounding neighborhood does not contribute towards their integration. (Source: Studio.)

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Project number           | <b>U8</b>  |
| Project name             | <b>Reduction of university-community separation</b>                    |
| Project type             | Site improvement   |
| Impact on town           | Low  |
| Impact on district       | Medium   |
| Consensus level          | Low  |
| Implementation potential | Medium   |
| Timeframe                | < 1 year   |
| Financial feasibility    | High   |
| Funding sources          | Private  |
| Sectors involved         | Private  |
| Main interventions       | Improve fence surrounding the university                               |
| Justification            | Reduces visible separation of the university and surrounding community |
| Prerequisite projects    | None   |

**Table U-10:** Summary matrix for project proposed to reduce university-community separation (Source: Studio.)

## 4.10 Public transportation link (Project U9)

By connecting itself to the university via a public transportation link, the city can show its willingness to work with the university in making Fort Valley a better place. A possibility to be considered includes the lobbying of Bluebird for donation of a bus to provide public transportation between the University district and other points in Fort Valley. In all likelihood, the bus would easily be able to run on a routine schedule between the University, Central and Bluebird districts. If Bluebird were to donate a bus, the only cost accrued by the city would be that of gasoline,



**Transit could connect all 3 districts**

operator, and routine maintenance. A small rider fare could cover these expenses.

Another possibility includes the introduction of bike lanes. Refer to Project G1 for a detailed explanation of the proposed bike plan.



**Figure U-19:** Bluebird could provide, as part of its community involvement, the buses for a public transit link from the university to downtown. (Source: Studio.)

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U9</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Public transportation link</b>  |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Public space improvement   |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Medium   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | High   |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | Low  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium   |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 1 year   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | High   |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private  |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Provide public transportation between the university and surrounding Fort Valley community                     |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Stepping stone project contributing to economic uplift<br>Transports consumers to other areas of the community |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None   |

**Table U-11:** Summary matrix for the public transportation link project (Source: Studio.)

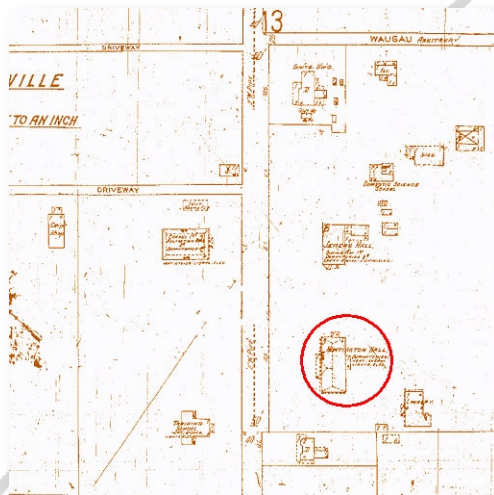


## 4.11 Preservation of Huntington Hall (Project U10)

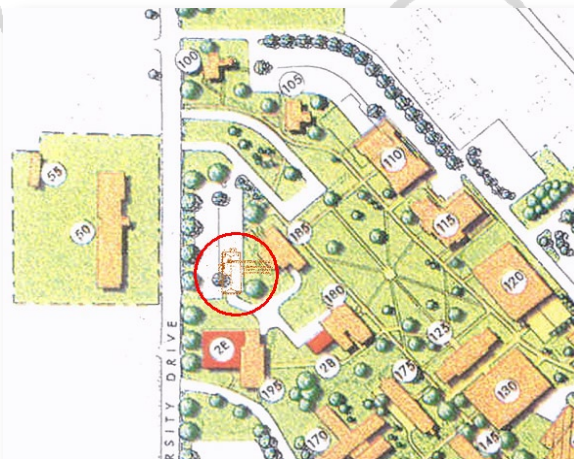
Fort Valley State's campus developed along Marshallville Road (State University Drive), on the northern side of the current campus. Between 1920 and 1930 the Fort Valley State campus shifted its orientation from an alignment with State University Drive and the community to the West, to an inward focused formal quad arrangement with a North South alignment. At the same time the school was transitioning from a strictly vocational school to a higher education institution, becoming a junior college in 1928 and a four-year college in 1939. The shift in campus orientation was the outward expression of the school's evolving identity.



University developed alongside existing streets, then turned



**Figure U-20:** Huntington Hall in its urban context in 1911 (Source: Sanborn maps.)



**Figure U-21:** Huntington Hall would be substituted by a parking lot in the future, according to the campus master plan. (Source: Fort Valley State University.)

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Project number           | <b>U10</b>  |
| Project name             | <b>Huntington Hall preservation</b>   |
| Project type             | Administrative  |
| Impact on town           | Low   |
| Impact on district       | Medium  |
| Consensus level          | Medium  |
| Implementation potential | High  |
| Timeframe                | <1 year   |
| Financial feasibility    | Very Low  |
| Funding sources          | None Required   |
| Sectors involved         | Private   |
| Main interventions       | Do not demolish Huntington Hall<br>Alteration of Campus Master Plan                                   |
| Justification            | One of few buildings remaining that provides a link to the beginnings of Fort Valley State University |
| Prerequisite projects    | None  |

**Table U-12:** Summary matrix for the Huntington Hall preservation project (Source: Studio.)

Huntington Hall is one of the last buildings that retains the original campus alignment. The relationship of this building to the new campus arrangement is



a physical reminder of the evolution of Fort Valley State from an ungraded grammar school to a regional university. The campus master plan calls for the demolition of Huntington Hall and the construction of a parking lot. Rather than being demolished, Huntington Hall should be renovated and designated as a University heritage point. Huntington Hall should be preserved as a reminder of the University's evolution from its vocational beginnings to its current University status. Possible uses include a continuing education facility, guest lecturer residence, or faculty administration space.



**Master plan calls for demolition of Huntington Hall**

## **Brownfield Projects**

### **4.12 Old College Inn & University Villas (Project U11)**



**Figure U-22:** Location of the two brownfields  
(Source: Studio.)

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project number</b>           | <b>U11</b>  |
| <b>Project name</b>             | <b>Old College Inn &amp; University Villas</b>                        |
| <b>Project type</b>             | Site Improvement  |
| <b>Impact on town</b>           | Low   |
| <b>Impact on district</b>       | Medium  |
| <b>Consensus level</b>          | High  |
| <b>Implementation potential</b> | Medium  |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                | 2 - 5 years   |
| <b>Financial feasibility</b>    | High  |
| <b>Funding sources</b>          | Public<br>Private   |
| <b>Sectors involved</b>         | Public<br>Private   |
| <b>Main interventions</b>       | Redevelopment of identified brownfields                               |
| <b>Justification</b>            | Underutilized brownfields that can contribute to district development |
| <b>Prerequisite projects</b>    | None  |

**Table U-13:** Summary matrix for the two brownfield sites project (Source: Studio.)



The University district includes two designated brownfield sites, Old College Inn and University Villas. The Old College Inn consists of two buildings whose insides have been gutted by fire and soundness of the structure is questionable. The site is currently owned by LJI Enterprises and is not in use. Condemnation of the building is the most probable option. The location of the property makes it ideal for a community/university based service.



**Old College Inn**

University Villas is located along State University Drive. It is currently only fifty percent occupied and delinquent on its taxes. The city might be interested in foreclosing on the property and selling it to the University for student housing.



**University Villas**

## 5. Conclusion

Historically, Fort Valley State University and its surrounding community were physically and figuratively on the other side of the tracks from downtown and the more prosperous northern neighborhoods. The city did not respond well to the needs of Fort Valley State and the University did not leverage its resources to prevent the decline of the surrounding neighborhood. Reversing this history of separation means connecting Fort Valley State University to the surrounding community and the City of Fort Valley. Together, these groups can address the needs of the economically depressed neighborhoods of Fort Valley in ways that benefit city residents and the University.



**Connection of university to community is needed**

Through development of a University District Strategy, a joint plan between the community, City and University, these three key players can begin to address the social and housing needs of all involved and affected. Strategies such as mixed income housing, creation of an economic node, and improvement of connections between the Fort Valley State University area and the rest of Fort Valley would enable the area around the University to increase its quality of life; thereby, attracting new residents and retaining old ones.



**Joint plan by 3 key players**

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> National Register of Historic Places (2002). *National Register of Historic Places-Georgia, Peach County* [Online]. Available: <[www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/GA/Peach/state.html](http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/GA/Peach/state.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> Bellamy, D. (1996). *Light in the Valley: A Pictorial History of Fort Valley State College Since 1895*. Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company.

<sup>3</sup> Bellamy, D. (1996). *Light in the Valley: A Pictorial History of Fort Valley State College Since 1895*. 171

<sup>4</sup> Fort Valley State University (2002). About FVSU [Online]. Available FVSU <[www.fvsu.edu](http://www.fvsu.edu)>.

<sup>5</sup> All information in the following paragraphs was obtained via phone/email interviews conducted by Lynn Patterson with Dr. Seema Dhir and Dr. Sarwan Dhir of Fort Valley State University.

<sup>6</sup> Bellamy, D. (1996). op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Available: <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>.

<sup>9</sup> Office of University Partnerships (2002). Available: <[www.oup.org](http://www.oup.org)>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "Making a Difference, An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America," Public private Venture.





<sup>12</sup> HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo

<sup>13</sup> The following information is taken from: US Department of Housing and Urban Development (2002). HBCU [Online]. Available: <www.hud.gov>.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Available: <www.census.gov>.

<sup>15</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development (2002). *Community Development Block Grant* [Online]. Available HUD <www.hud.gov>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Available: <www.census.gov>.

<sup>18</sup> Hale, Sheffield (2001). *Preservation Promotes Growth*. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

<sup>19</sup> Georgia Historic Preservation Division (2000). *CLG Frequently Asked Questions* [Online]. Available: Georgia Historic Preservation Division <http://www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/histpres/>.

<sup>20</sup> National Park Service (2002). *Links to the Past: Grants, Tax Credits, and Other Assistance* [Online]. Available: National Park Service <www.cr.nps.gov>.

<sup>21</sup> Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation (2002). *Revolving Fund Information* [Online]. Available: Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation <www.georgiatrust.org/revfund.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation (2002). *Living Places: Building Better Neighborhoods* [Online]. Available: Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation <www.georgiatrust.org/ga\_neighbor.html>.



# Conclusion

The Fort Valley Brownfield Redevelopment Plan offers a blueprint the significant economic, social and environmental improvement of this community. Working together, the vision, guiding framework and city-wide and district level projects support Fort Valley's redevelopment potential. This plan addresses the wide variety of needs in the community – including those of residents, students, faculty, entrepreneurs, government, and visitors.



**Studio offers blueprint for change**

To achieve and implement the recommendations of this plan, The City of Fort Valley must first work on making connections. Fort Valley's future requires rebuilding partnerships between the disparate segments of this community, working as an integrated unit, toward a unified vision for Fort Valley. Essential partnerships require connectivity across race, income, age, institution, and private and public sectors. Without these partnerships, Fort Valley will not be able to tap into its greatest resource, itself. With these partnerships, Fort Valley's possibilities for improved quality of life and economic vitality are limitless.



**All kinds of connections needed**

Second, Fort Valley should consider the recommendations of this plan and further refine them to reflect its own interpretations of place and people. Stakeholders must come together and prioritize various projects. As indicated in the final matrix of all projects on next page, the wide range in cost, impact and responsibility allow for a balance of projects in any particular year. Developing a long range plan highlighting city-wide endeavors and support for district level projects will enable Fort Valley to target future economic activity. A clear sense of direction not only enhances civic pride, but it creates opportunity for internal and external investment.



**Further refinement necessary**

In preparing these plans, Fort Valley must come to terms with its own heritage. In honoring its history, Fort Valley should capitalize on its strong agricultural, transportation and industrial heritage. However, Fort Valley must create reminders of its former injustices--ones that have alienated and adversely affected its people and its environment—so as to not repeat the mistakes of the past.



**Future and past relate**

Finally, Fort Valley must address the growing concern over transportation and sprawl. Fort Valley is located in a rapidly expanding region. In order to maintain its unique identity, Fort Valley must plan for growth. This planning should consider the impact of surrounding regions and their growth patterns, optimal transportation linkages that do not sacrifice the established resources and character of Fort Valley, and develop interconnectivity between internal nodes and external links.



**Threats of traffic and sprawl**

This plan reflects the dedicated work of the Georgia Tech Fort Valley Redevelopment Brownfield Studio. It is hoped this plan will be a major contributor for the successful redevelopment of Fort Valley for all its citizens.



| project number | project name                                 | impact on town | impact on district | consensus level | implementation potential | financial feasibility | timeframe    | sectors involved             |
|----------------|--|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| G1             | Bike path system                             | Very high      | N/A                | High            | Medium                   | Very low              | >10 years    | Public, Private              |
| G2             | Protection of existing orchards              | Very high      | N/A                | Medium          | Medium                   | High                  | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Private              |
| G3             | Welcome gateways                             | High           | N/A                | Very High       | High                     | High                  | 1 year       | Public                       |
| G4             | Revision of Comprehensive Plan & Zoning      | High           | N/A                | Medium          | High                     | Very High             | 2 - 5 years  | Public                       |
| B1             | Bluebird promenade                           | High           | Very High          | Medium          | Medium                   | Low                   | <1 year      | Private                      |
| B2             | Five Points roundabout                       | Very high      | Very High          | Medium          | Very High                | High                  | 1 year       | Public, Private              |
| B3             | Vineville infill housing                     | High           | Very High          | Medium          | Medium                   | High                  | 6 - 10 years | Public, Non-profit           |
| B4             | North Camellia area                          | Medium         | High               | Very Low        | Low                      | Medium                | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Private              |
| B5             | Commercial Heights streetscape               | High           | Very High          | Medium          | Very High                | Medium                | <1 year      | Public, Private              |
| B6             | Ice House heritage site                      | Medium         | Medium             | Medium          | Very Low                 | Medium                | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Non-profit           |
| B7             | Groundwater restoration plant                | High           | Very High          | Very Low        | Very Low                 | Very High             | 6 - 10 years | Public                       |
| B8             | Cemetery                                     | Low            | Low                | Medium          | Medium                   | Medium                | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Private              |
| B9             | Bird's nest improvements                     | Medium         | High               | Low             | Medium                   | Low                   | 1 year       | Private                      |
| B10            | Westview Clinic                              | Low            | Medium             | Very Low        | Very Low                 | High                  | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Non-profit           |
| B11            | Commercial Heights land assembly             | Very high      | Very High          | Low             | Medium                   | High                  | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Private, Non- Profit |
| B12            | Jolly Nut historical center                  | Medium         | Medium             | Medium          | Very Low                 | Medium                | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Non-profit           |
| D1             | Woolfolk edge remediation                    | Very high      | Very High          | High            | Medium                   | Very low              | >10 years    | Public, Private, Non- Profit |
| D2             | Railroad R.O.W. & depot buildings            | Very high      | Very High          | Low             | Low                      | Low                   | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Private, Non- Profit |
| D3             | Austin Theater revitalization                | High           | High               | Medium          | High                     | Low                   | 1 year       | Public, Private, Non- Profit |
| D4             | Environmental Resource Center                | High           | Medium             | Medium          | High                     | High                  | 1 year       | Public, Non-Profit           |
| D5             | Vacant downtown lots                         | Medium         | High               | Medium          | Medium                   | Medium                | 2 - 5 years  | Public                       |
| D6             | Brownfields affected by Woolfolk             | Medium         | High               | Medium          | Medium                   | Medium                | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Private, Non- Profit |
| D7             | Façade reconstructions                       | Medium         | High               | High            | Medium                   | Medium                | 2 - 5 years  | Public                       |
| D8             | Former Hotel at Commercial Hts. & Church     | Low            | Medium             | Low             | Low                      | Medium                | 2-5 years    | Public, Private              |
| D9             | Former tin shop site/vacant lot              | Medium         | Medium             | High            | High                     | High                  | < 1 year     | Public, Private              |
| D10            | Former soda water bottling site/ café site   | Very Low       | Low                | Medium          | High                     | Medium                | 1 year       | Public, Private              |
| U1             | University district redevelopment strategy   | Medium         | High               | Very High       | High                     | High                  | <1 year      | Public, Private, Non- Profit |
| U2             | Community-based partnership                  | Medium         | High               | Medium          | High                     | Very High             | <1 year      | Public, Private, Non- Profit |
| U2a            | Seek HBCU/CDBG funds                         | Low            | Low                | Very High       | Very High                | Very High             | <1 year      | Public                       |
| U3             | Increase of housing opportunities            | High           | High               | Medium          | Medium                   | Low                   | 6 - 10 years | Public, Private              |
| U4             | Economic node @ Carver & State Univ. Dr.     | High           | High               | Medium          | Medium                   | Low                   | 2 - 5 years  | Private                      |
| U5             | Street improvements                          | Medium         | High               | High            | Medium                   | Medium                | 1 year       | Public, Private              |
| U6             | State University Drive gateway               | High           | High               | Medium          | Medium                   | Medium                | 1 year       | Public, Private              |
| U7             | Ganoville historic district                  | Low            | Low                | Very High       | Very High                | Very High             | <1 year      | Public                       |
| U8             | Reduction of university-community separation | Low            | Medium             | Low             | Medium                   | High                  | < 1 year     | Private                      |
| U9             | Public transportation link                   | Medium         | High               | Low             | Medium                   | High                  | 1 year       | Public, Private              |
| U10            | Huntington Hall preservation                 | Low            | Medium             | Medium          | High                     | Very Low              | <1 year      | Private                      |
| U11            | Old College Inn & University Villas          | Low            | Medium             | High            | Medium                   | High                  | 2 - 5 years  | Public, Private              |

**Table C-1:** Overview of all proposed projects with all indicators that can be compared. This list should literally be seen as a menu of options for Fort Valley, where each project can be chosen independently according to the specific circumstances of the moment.

